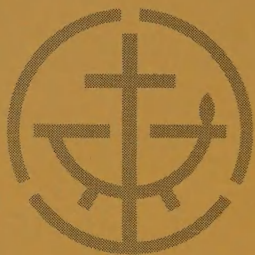


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## INTERLUDES

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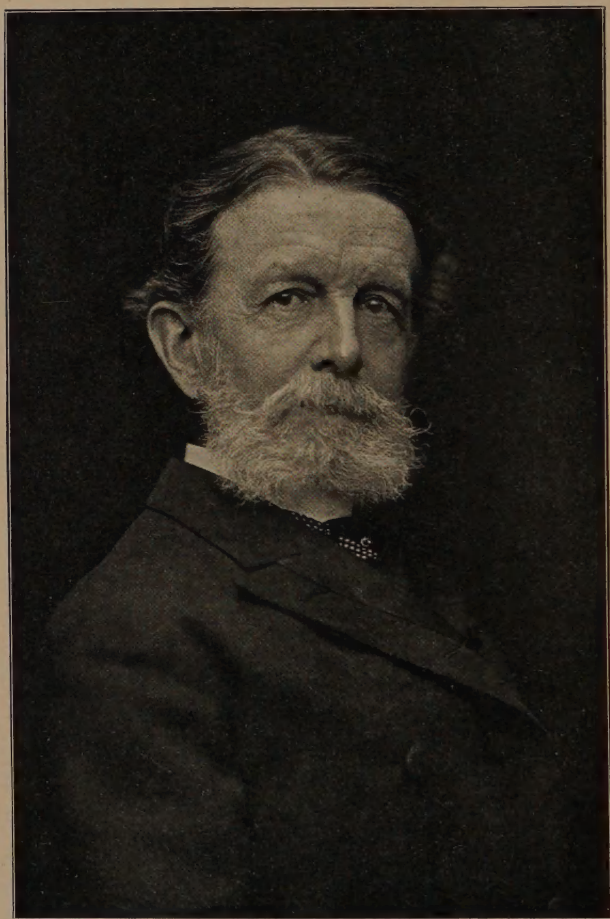
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# INTERLUDES

IN A TIME OF CHANGE

ETHICAL      SOCIAL      THEOLOGICAL

BY

JAMES MORRIS WHITON, PH.D. Yale

LONDON

JAMES CLARKE & CO., 13 & 14 FLEET STREET

1909



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TO  
MY WIFE  
MY EARLY COMPANION  
IN  
THEOLOGICAL STUDY

School of Theology  
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A10042



## PREFATORY NOTE

MOST of the papers in this volume have been used either in print or in public addresses at various times during the past dozen years. However dissimilar, they have a certain unity. They deal with various aspects of the change which has recently come over human thought—the greatest change that history records as effected within the period of a single life—completely effected already in many minds, while in many more either incomplete or even unbegun, yet advancing as irresistibly as the ocean tide. To contribute his mite to this advance has been the writer's purpose.

Acknowledgment is due here to the courtesy with which the publishers of *The Forum*, *The Homiletic Review*, *The American Journal of Theology*, *The New World* and *The Outlook* have granted permission for the reprints here included. In the revision required for this republication some rephrasing and some expansion have here and there been found desirable.

J. M. W.

New York,  
May 24, 1909.





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## Ethical Progress in the Nineteenth Century



## I

# ETHICAL PROGRESS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY <sup>1</sup>

FROM the sidewalk by the south wall of Trinity churchyard, in New York, the passer-by reads among the graves the name of Alexander Hamilton, the organiser of our national finances. It may recall that even fifty years after Hamilton was slain by Burr in a duel on the opposite shore of the Hudson, in 1804, a Massachusetts representative felt himself constrained by an influential opinion at Washington to accept a challenge to mortal combat with his fellow-congressman from South Carolina.

In 1818, in a Massachusetts town where I was inducted into the ministry half a century later, temporary booths, erected near the Congregational church, dispensed ardent spirits for the refreshment of the crowd assembled there at the ordination of a new pastor.

I have had in my hands bills of sale, by which, a few years before that incident, a minister of the Gospel in New Jersey conveyed legal title to the ownership of human chattels, negro men and women.

Such reminiscences suffice to remind us of a fact

<sup>1</sup> Address at the inaugural meeting of the New York State Conference of Religion, November, 1900.



## Interludes

that we are all aware of—the standard both of private and public morals is higher at the end of the century than at its beginning. To-day, as men did three thousand years ago, when Homer sang,

We vaunt ourselves as greatly better than our fathers were.

Yet to-day what the oracle said to Israel, when Canaan was but partly mastered, must be said to us : “There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.” If we record great progress made, it is to inspire effort for great progress still required.

In attempting to describe in half an hour the advance that only a volume could adequately record, it may be regarded in two aspects : (1) *Extensively*, in an enlargement of the field of ethical conduct, taking in new areas of human life, new subjects of ethical relations, new classes of persons and actions ; (2) *Intensively*, in a more thorough cultivation of the fields previously tilled, substituting subsoil ploughing for surface ploughing, profounder moral views for shallower.

I. The extensive aspect of ethical progress is the more obvious to the popular view, as in the temperance reform and the anti-slavery reform. The most salient advance, however, is in that renaissance of Christian Missions for which our century is not less conspicuous than for the new births of science. If the theological prejudices which adhere to the subject can be put aside, if the uniform testimony of the diplomatic representatives of Great Britain and the United States in Oriental lands can be accepted as better than the snap-judgments of globe-trotters,

## Ethical Progress in the Nineteenth Century

if the educational institutions and the medical relief for human suffering which missionaries have carried can be fairly estimated, no landmark of ethical progress is more indisputable and impressive than this spontaneous uprising to distribute the best things of Christendom to uplift and purify and enrich the life of even the lowest and the neediest nations. Yet many among us still regard it with an apathy that puts them at a lower ethical level than the oft-quoted poet of pagan Rome: "I am a man; nothing that touches a man fails to touch me."

The world-embracing human interest which thus illustrates the extensiveness of ethical progress appears also in its embrace of those formerly regarded as social outcasts. The whole field of penology has been taken under ethical treatment. So barbarous was the criminal law of England at the beginning of the nineteenth century that pickpockets and shoplifters were put to death. It was also a capital offence there for a soldier or a sailor to beg without a pass from a magistrate or commander. Not only have these sanguinary laws been abolished, but the whole theory of judicial punishments, whether human or divine, has been ethically born anew, however unregenerate the practice here and there. Instead of a vindictive a reformatory purpose has been substituted, regarding the criminal not as an enemy to be tormented, but as a lost one to be reclaimed. Formerly a hell, the prison is now, at least in theory, a hospital, with moral and religious influences as chief among its reformatory appliances. Yet even now how short our practice is of theory many a county jail testifies

## Interludes

to our shame. Two other notable extensions of the ethical field in the last quarter-century can here only be put on record—the Social Settlement and the University Extension; the former introducing into the ethical relation of neighbours, and the latter into that of pupils, large numbers formerly outside.

In 1856 the leading nations of Europe agreed to abolish privateering, our Government declining the compact only because it did not go to the full and logical extent of granting immunities to private property at sea equal with those granted on the land. The formation of the Red Cross Society, in 1864, and the immunities granted to it by civilized states for its mitigations of the sufferings of war, mark another concession of ethical rights to the public enemy. The work of the Peace Society, with its outcome in the progress of international arbitration, signalized especially by the recent Peace Conference at The Hague, has brought us seemingly within sight of the coming transformation of the public enemy into a peaceful litigant in courts of international law—thus bringing the man across the sea into the same ethical relationship as the man across the street. The sinister phenomena that blot this record, the barbarities still perpetrated in the name of civilization, must be confessed with shame, but the backward eddies must not be mistaken for the onward current.

Still other clear signs of ethical progress in an extensive view appear in the transfer of lotteries from the class of respectable to the class of criminal enterprises, the result, in this country, of more than sixty years' struggle, crowned with victory in 1893 over

# Ethical Progress in the Nineteenth Century

the last enemy in Louisiana. They appear in the lifting of civil disabilities from classes previously denied civil rights—as Catholics till 1829, and Jews till 1858, in Parliament, and, now, in some of our States, of atheists in courts of justice. They appear in a long series of legislative acts in civilized countries by which the rights of women and children, cruelly invaded by greedy employers, have been taken under the shield of law. They appear more conspicuously in the large provisions of public charity for the indigent sick, for the insane, for helpless children, and other unfortunates. The munificent educational endowments for which our country is admired by the world proceed from impulses which are predominantly ethical. The outermost rim of the ethical field has been reached in the taking even of dumb animals into an ethical relationship, as claimants of the rights with which the Father both of men and of sparrows has invested the humblest of his sentient creatures.

II. We now turn from the extensive to the intensive aspect of ethical progress, where the advance consists not in the enlargement, but the better cultivation of the field, improvement upon the ideas and achievements of our predecessors. Extensively, ethical progress has appeared mainly in the enlargement of practical philanthropy. Intensively, it appears to have been mainly, yet by no means wholly, in the ethicizing of theory in those opposite hemispheres of thought that are concerned with theology on one hand, and economics and civics on the other.

In theology the ethical advance has been immense,

## Interludes

*Herbert  
of God*

if we reckon with its leaders, and not with the loitering rear-guard, with whom, rather than with the van, some scientific men have a curious preference for battle. The potentate theory and the potter theory of God are fast yielding to the paternal theory. That intellectual errors about God are morally guilty, a fallacy that has subjected many a pure soul to cruel ostracism, or worse, the last quarter-century has dispatched to the company of its twin, the witchcraft delusion. Schemes of peace with God, so-called "plans of salvation" based on a forensic and fictitious righteousness not our own, but legally transferred to us from a substitute, are giving place to convictions that there is no real salvation or peace with God except so far as there is righteousness in personal character of Jesus' type. *Evolution  
ethical  
spiritual  
process* The unethical conception of the Bible, in which sundry relics of pagan superstition and barbarism in the primitive period of religious development were fancied to be integral parts of a divine revelation, has been superseded, except in the cyclone cellars<sup>1</sup> of the Church. The divine inspiration of the Bible has obtained recognition of its essentially ethical character, as an enlightening and morally renewing influence, in place of the unethical estimate of it as a certificate of infallibility of no practical use except to infallible readers. And last, but not least, that frightful dogma of an endless punishment hereafter, which, for the first time in history, was made an article of religion in the year 544 at the instance of the Greek emperor Justinian,

<sup>1</sup> Refuges from tornadoes in America.



## Ethical Progress in the Nineteenth Century

has given place, except in a few mummified creeds awaiting the undertaker's leisure, to the ethical belief that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." The conception of divine judgment itself has been ethicized from a vindictive to a restorative work, in which judgment becomes a halfway house on the road of salvation, where the sobered sufferer may, if only he will, change from the down-grade to the up-grade. The whole conception of human life, as related to God, has undergone an ethical transformation, and the best work for this has been done, impartial critics confess, by the theological heretics, whose fruits, if not their praise, abound throughout the churches. Man, instead of being reduced to that "ethical nonentity" which mediæval theology made him, as a creature naturally incapable of aught but moral offensiveness to God, the prize of an unearthly struggle between the powers of divine grace and satanic malignity, has been restored by the ethical progress of this century to his natural ethical value as the subject of a divine education, a child of God, to be trained in the saving knowledge of his Father through service to his brother men.

*Judgment  
discipline*

With this service the department of economics has much to do. Here, also, as in the department of theological thought, the intensive progress of theory is conspicuous. Yet it has not been so marked in statement as in the acceptance of statements long since made. The passionate but silenced claims of John Ball, Joss Fritz, and the slaughtered peasants of Wyclif's and Luther's time, are advanced now from university chairs and cathedral stalls. The

## Interludes

natural-right doctrines of the French physiocrats of the eighteenth century, swept away by the cyclone of revolution, have inspired since the middle of the nineteenth century the now rapidly growing school of Christian Socialists, reckoning churchmen and economists of the highest eminence among its leaders. The very definition of economics has been significantly ethicized : it is no longer the science of mere wealth, which reduced man, as Ruskin said, to a mere "covetous machine," fit to sit for the portrait of a lost soul, but, as Professor Ingram says in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," of wealth as concerned with the maintenance and evolution of society. Facts have begun to correspond to this definition, and are destined to a larger correspondence. By a long series of measures the privileged classes of England, says Mr. Grant Allen, have been enfranchising and equipping the unprivileged to compete with them. The two facts most indicative of the progressive leavening of economic theories and methods by ethical principles are these : (1) In a period of unprecedented accumulations of wealth in a few hands the attention of scientific economists is now most given to the problems of equitable distribution. (2) The princely benefactions of many immensely wealthy men indicate the consciousness that such distribution is due, and is better made by them than for them.

In civics, also, progress has been made intensively, though practice is as yet even less conformed to ethical theory than in economics. The exaggerated assertion of natural rights, inherited from centuries of conflict with tyrants for a freedom in which citizen-

## Ethical Progress in the Nineteenth Century

ship was valued more for its worth to the individual than its worth to society, is being duly balanced by the discovery that individual rights are not an end, but a means; that citizenship is not a private asset, but a public trust; that democracy, as Professor MacCunn says, has missed its mark if it has nothing but rights to insist on. In many a group of promoters of good citizenship; in the civil service reform, initiated in Great Britain in 1855, much more feebly here in 1872, but now evidently nearing its goal; in the stronger regard given by religious teachers to civic obligations as religious duties, may be seen the slow ripening of the doctrine with which our fellow-citizen, Francis Lieber, balanced the extreme individualism of the Jeffersonian period, by declaring that there are no rights without correlative duties, and no duties without correlative rights. Yet this clear trend of nineteenth-century civics toward the primacy of civic duties, as the end for which civic rights exist, is entitled to be called progress only so far as it succeeds in marrying the nineteenth-century extensions of individual freedom to the truth proclaimed by the philosophers of classic Greece, that the freeman is free only that he may the better serve the interests of the Commonwealth.

In view, now, of this necessarily concise and incomplete record, I dare say that there has been more ethical progress, both extensive and intensive, during the nineteenth century than during all the eighteen centuries preceding. I have said nothing of the multiplying books on ethics theoretical and practical, nothing of the ethical-culture movement, so promising,

*Citizenship  
a public  
trust*

*Rights  
& Duties*

## Interludes

especially for provoking healthy emulation in religious societies, which have sometimes seemed to forget that ethics must be taught as applied religion. That there are deplorable gaps to be filled in the line of progress may be frankly confessed by the most hopeful. Conspicuous evils menace the foundation of society in the family. The home is widely desecrated by the lax treatment of the marriage relation, and the vile housing of many poor. There is no small moral anarchy both in business and in politics. Yet many of the dark areas are not now so black as formerly. No bank now fails, as in the time of the "wild cats," with \$580,000 in outstanding notes and \$86.40 in specie for their redemption. And the darkest areas of to-day confront a growing public rebuke. A public sentiment spreads, which Dean Hodges has expressed in saying, "Economics, like theology, is of little use but for character." The ethical forces which have effected such progress as we have recorded are at work with a growing momentum, and justify an optimistic outlook upon the twentieth century.

Finally, none should fail to note the significance with which the subject of ethical progress appears on the programme of this Conference, as a preface to its various topics of practical religious interest. This is doubly significant. It means: (1) That the very conception of ethics has been deepened in our time. To talk now of "mere ethics" is antiquated. Ethics is no longer a science of mere rules and behaviour, but the science of moral nature. As such, it has to concern itself not merely with the moral nature found on this speck of a planet, but also with the moral

## Ethical Progress in the Nineteenth Century

nature which inhabits the universe, "the Ancient of Days," and our relation to the Holy One. Thus ethics has become, nay must be, religious in order to be complete. (2) It means also that religion has become ethical. The theosophizing and incense-burning and ecclesiasticism that have stolen its garb are being reduced to transparent impostures by the fast-growing conviction that our knowledge of God, as Dean Fremantle has said, "is no greater than what is shown of it in our worldly relations."

*Ethics  
Religion*

Aristotle said: "Society begins to be, that men may live; it continues to be, that men may live well." The practical ends, therefore, of ethics as a social science, and of religion as a social spirit, are identical. Nothing, then, can be of practical value in religion but what is ethical. This is the amply sufficient ground of truth upon which all really religious men, however various their forms of doctrine, polity, or ritual, can unite as allies for the furtherance of whatever promotes, and the extirpation of whatever hinders, men's living well; living as it is man's duty and man's right to live. Such a union, exhibited in this Conference of Religion, is one of the most unmistakable tokens of ethical progress.

Yet must religion, as the mightiest of those divine inspirations that well up from the subconscious and primal deeps of our moral nature, furnish the one inexhaustible motor-force of successful ethical endeavour. This is a truth less open to question since that great scientist has set his seal to it, who first coined the word *agnostic* to describe his position in theology. Eighteen years ago, in view of menacing evils threat-

## Interludes

ening the stability of the Republic, a distinguished professor of political economy declared it urgently important to call out "the moral reserves." It is as important to-day as then. That they have not yet all been called out, the flagitious administration of our chief cities shows. Religion only can call them all out. Only in so doing can religion make good against all gainsaying her ancient claim to be the keystone of the arch of human life. For, as Dean Fremantle has said, "When the Church (*i.e.*, as he meant, Religion) is seen to be the constant inspirer of human progress, there will be no sceptics but those to whom human progress is indifferent."

## An Ethical Creed





## II

### AN ETHICAL CREED<sup>1</sup>

DR. JOHN WATSON (Ian Maclaren) has been saying that no Church since the primitive days of Christianity has ventured to formulate "an ethical creed." By this he doubtless means a creed expressing the ethical ideals of Christianity with the emphasis given them in the Scriptures.

Dr. Watson's remark is abundantly corroborated by a survey of the principal creeds, œcumenical and Protestant. The former, particularly the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene, are liturgical affirmations of the historical and spiritual facts and doctrines of the Evangelic Tradition, to which the Nicene adds its metaphysical doctrine of the deity of Christ to fence out the Arian heresy. In both of these the ethical element is present more in inference than in expression. In the Protestant creeds, beginning with the Augsburg Confession in 1530, the ethical element, though not wanting, is thrown into the shade by the theological emphasis on orthodox doctrine, which in some points is even non-ethical, affirming in the Heidelberg Catechism that God imputes to the believer in Christ the perfect righteousness and holiness of Christ. The duty of "good works" all Protestant creeds

<sup>1</sup> From *The Outlook*, October 20, 1906.

## Interludes

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able  
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generation  
stand-

affirm, but deny them any religious value except as the fruit of faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Martineau, in his "Types of Ethical Theory," remarks upon this with some exaggeration: "With the proclamation and spread of Protestantism the *religious* value of morals disappeared."

Furthermore, the ethical standard adopted was neither the highest nor the most complete. It was taken from the Pentateuch rather than from the Gospels, from the law of Moses rather than the life of Jesus. The Westminster Confession of 1647 affirms that the moral law of God is set forth in the Ten Commandments, mainly negative as they are, as "a perfect rule of righteousness." Thus deficient ethically, the creeds expend their strength on an interest for doctrinal knowledge, and overshadow the things to be done with the things to be believed. Closely related to this one-sidedness is the fact noted by a friendly critic, that "the Church has found it easier to worship Jesus as the Son of God than to follow him as the Son of man."

The primitive documents of Christianity set it forth as "the Way" of the godly life, with equal emphasis on its ethical and its religious characteristics. Its subsequently formed creeds exhibit it in terms of dogma rather than of life. A few years since a seminary professor wrote that the Presbyterian Church existed for the maintenance of the doctrinal beliefs set forth in its theological standards. The natural evil consequence of this long magnifying of the intellectual and dwarfing of the ethical interest is seen in the inveterate misconception of Christianity,

## An Ethical Creed

which repels from the churches so many good people who regard it as a system of doctrines which they more or less dissent from, rather than as the Way of the moral and religious life which their consciences approve. A consequence more pernicious is that, outside of the churches, as well as within, many have made to themselves idols—a crude morality without religion, and a crude religion morally deficient.

Such, then, is the urgent need for a creed blending religion and morality with equal fulness in the indissoluble union which each requires for genuineness. The pattern is abundantly clear in the Scriptures. These illuminate what the creeds obscure. How closely the Hebrew prophets identified morality with religion appears in Micah's classic question: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—that is, such justice and such mercy as accompany converse in humility with God. The Pauline Epistles give us theology in abundance, but ethics also with a fulness which the creeds, while amplifying the theology, have neglected. In St. Paul's letters theology always flowers out profusely into moral precepts, and the final emphasis is regularly placed upon the righteous, Christlike life. "The things which befit sound doctrine," as stated in the Epistle to Titus, are precepts for holy living by men and women, bond and free. But it is, above all, in the life of Jesus that the interpenetration, the perfect fusion of religion and morality is seen in ideal completeness.

I believe in Jesus Christ and in following him is the

*The church  
is not lo-  
because  
is not  
lovable*

## Interludes

most compendious and also most complete creed for a Christian man. But intelligent self-direction in this line calls for supplementary ethical definition. General terms require specification. The whole can be adequately known only by knowing the particulars that compose it. Theologically, the creeds have given such knowledge in ample details. Ethically, it remains to be given in equal amplitude, and even larger, since conduct counts for vastly more than knowledge. Faith is simple, but occasions for its exercise in conduct are manifold. The ethical definition of what it is to believe in Christ and follow him must needs be somewhat expansive in detail. Creed-makers are commonly supposed to have had their day. Cutting down their intellectual work to things essential is supposed to be all that remains to do. On the contrary, the ethical field in which they did so little is one in which much remains to do.

Ten years ago Dr. Watson himself made a beginning in this field. It was widely discussed at the time. Its expansion of ethical interest with contraction of the theological called forth some protests from ecclesiastical quarters. Thus it read :

✕ I believe in the Fatherhood of God ; in the words of Jesus ; in a clean heart ; in the service of love ; in the unworldly life ; in the Beatitudes. I promise to trust God, and to follow Christ, to forgive my enemies, and to seek after the righteousness of God.

This statement of a confession in which all Christian people must agree was offered simply as a basis for Christian unity. Adequate for that, it is less adequate for the greater need of the development of an instructed Christian conscience. This requires

## An Ethical Creed

more specific affirmations of the various characteristics of Christian life and conduct. All Christians theoretically "believe in the words of Jesus"; not all follow every line of conduct required by such belief. All Christians "believe in a clean heart"; not all in every particular of the conduct which makes the heart really clean. For practical uses an ethical creed should so explicitly delineate the Way of life and conduct which the Christian ideal requires that the ignorant and inexperienced may comprehend it, and may intelligently follow it amidst temptations to various forms of unrighteousness. While Dr. Watson's brief formulary goes in the right direction, its generalities need to be particularized for pedagogic use.

What this involves has been well expressed in a paragraph of the declaration of faith adopted this year for the united church in which Congregationalists, Methodist Protestants, and the United Brethren propose to coalesce.<sup>1</sup>

We believe that, according to Christ's law, men of the Christian faith exist wholly for the service of man, not only in holding forth the Word of life, but in the support of works and institutions of piety and charity, in the maintenance of human freedom, in the deliverance of all those that are oppressed, in the enforcement of civic justice, and the rebuke of all unrighteousness.

Excellent as this is, one may question whether it comes fully up to the ideal. An ethical compartment in a block of propositions does not impart ethical character to the whole. In any statement whatso-

<sup>1</sup> This project has been arrested, at least for a time, when apparently on the eve of success.

## Interludes

ever a specifically ethical characteristic is recognisable only in the purposing of an object of will and endeavour. An ethical creed, therefore, must not only express the relation of its *credenda* to *agenda*, of belief to action, but this relation must appear throughout, to give ethical character to the whole.

The ideal creed of this kind is unlikely to be formulated by a single hand. But it will have to meet two distinct needs : (1) emphasis on moral ideals rather than, as in the theological creeds, on intellectual ideas ; (2) sufficient detail to avoid both the brevity that veils and the diffuseness that tires. Some such specimen as the following may serve for illustration of the aim :

We believe in God as the Father of all men, requiring a brotherly mind and conduct toward all from each.

We believe in Jesus Christ as our divine pattern of sonship to God and brotherhood to man ; the Captain of our salvation through warfare against whatever is unbrotherly toward man and unfilial toward God.

We believe in the Holy Spirit as our Monitor, Quickener, and Guide into all truth and duty in Jesus' Way of love and faithfulness to God and man.

We believe in the Bible as the record of the Holy Spirit's work in bringing men out of darkness into the saving light of Christ, that we may know the will of God, and do it.

We believe that salvation through Christ is salvation from a selfish heart and life, wrought out through unselfish service to men, to be done as for God, and as a necessary part of the true worship of God.

We believe that the whole duty of man is to seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness,

By loving one's neighbour as one's self, and treating as neighbour whomever we can help in his need ;

By sacrifice at the altar of human need as sacrifice at the altar of God ;

## An Ethical Creed

By aiming at goodness as true greatness, and greatness in unselfish service as the noblest greatness ;

By valuing material goods according to their uses as helps toward a higher life for ourselves and others ;

By preferring a rich life to a rich living, richness in good thoughts and deeds to richness in possessions ;

By strictness with ourselves and charitableness to others ;

By forgetting offences, remembering kindnesses, and speaking truth in love ;

By regarding the good in others rather than the evil, and making more of our agreements with others than our disagreements ;

By abhorring all insincerity, indolence, and cowardice ;

By hating every form of evil in one's self or in the community, and warring against it ;

By steadfast patience, courage, and sympathy, regardless of inconvenience or loss, in furthering our Father's will in ourselves, our neighbourhood, our nation, and our world.

The present time of moral awakening seems to invite constructive work in this line. The School of Ethical Culture must no longer be permitted to outdo the Church. Whatever its religious lack, it has been studious of the Biblical ideals of righteousness, and the Church may wisely learn from it. Finally, in return to an important point, an ethical creed must, on the one hand, like any other, be confessional in its avowal of ideals. On the other hand, its serviceableness for pedagogic, disciplinary, cultural purposes is of equal consequence. To secure this, there must be adequate explication of the implicit content of the confession in statements plain and terse. Between vague brevity and wearisome prolixity must be found the golden mean. This is the point of aim for the attainment of a satisfying result.





# The Moral Crisis Confronting the Church



### III

## THE MORAL CRISIS CONFRONTING THE CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

SYMPTOMS of moral deterioration in American society have long been apparent. More than twenty years ago, in his little book, "What Social Classes Owe to Each Other," Professor Sumner, of Yale, speaking from an economist's standpoint, declared it the duty of the hour to call out "the moral reserves" to avert growing evils. The warning was unheeded then; it is beginning to be heeded now. During the past few years the roar of the cataract has made itself heard, and the oars have begun to be plied against the downward drift. Signs of alarm and earnest effort appear, and with good reason. The daily press publishes edifying editorial sermonettes. Church conventions have begun to improve their opportunity. The recent two days' meeting of the Congregational Association of New Jersey headed its programme, "For a Revival of Conscience."

There are also premonitions of an economic crisis, as all know, in the strife between capital and labour. Nothing more need be said of this than that it is at

<sup>1</sup> From *The Homiletic Review*, August, 1906;—containing the substance of various addresses before the New York State Conference of Religion.

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bottom moral, growing out of unrighteous inequalities in social conditions. That this is so needs no further evidence than the concurrent testimony of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, the National Council of the Congregational Churches, and the Positivist leader, Frederic Harrison, all declaring that the real crisis is not economic but moral.

Such, then, are the conditions which now confront the churches, the nuclei of the moral forces of the community, the professed custodians of moral interests, with a call to cast out devils and enthrone the righteousness of God. The honour of moral leadership thus far the Church can hardly claim. During all the years while evils were growing to their present portentous enormity, the Church in her great assemblies made little or no protest against them. Half a dozen years ago the late Senator Hoar, in the chair of a religious conference, affirmed that the pulpit was lacking in that vigorous treatment of moral questions which he had observed in former times. However that may have been, the present fact is that the pulpit has begun to find its voice, and the Church is coming to consciousness, not only of an imminent moral crisis, but of an imperative call to take the lead in deciding it, and to vindicate its claim to a divine mission by a work for righteousness that shall go deep enough for permanency. It is not enough that flourishing iniquities are consumed in a transient blaze of popular indignation; the fire will die out; iniquity will sprout again. It is just here that the demand for leadership with which the present crisis confronts the churches applies to them a serious

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test, a question how well they are grounded in those fundamental moral truths through neglect of which the evil came, and the realization of which must bar its return.

It may seem paradoxical to say that the real nature of morality is not yet truly understood by many Christian people—though this is a central point of religious concern. Some rather startling statements on this point have been made by Christian teachers, *e.g.*, Professor Bowne, of Boston University, tells us that “the vast majority of men have no properly moral aims at all.” What he means by this will become clear as we proceed. Yet sound convictions as to right and wrong exist, and a considerable degree of moral sensitiveness undoubtedly prevails, with general censure of conduct that fails to conform to the current standard of right. The conventional standard of morality has been notably advanced. What elect souls won by struggle and sacrifice is now accepted as a matter of course by the crowd. Precious are such gains. We do not undervalue them; only they must not sate us, but whet us. Just here is the fatal fault: conformity to the current moral standard is supposed to be genuine morality; but real morality is another thing. What it is, the ancient maxim teaches: “He who ceases to become better ceases to be good.” Paraphrasing this, Thomas Hill Green, of Oxford, taught: “It is in the continued effort to be better that goodness consists.”

As this is the heart of the matter, it is a point on which no doubt must linger. What the vital element of morality is we see in the history of morality.

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This is a history of change, of progress from low conditions up. Practices once tolerated have gradually been banned as infamous. In times not far distant rum flowed at church ordinations, lotteries were authorized for the benefit of Presbyterian churches in Philadelphia, negroes were sold at auction in the national capital. Such contrasts with the higher standard of the present point to the vital element, without which the lower type of morality could never have developed into the higher. While moral standards change, they show an element abiding constant through all change. This abiding element is the essential element—an upward look and struggle.

x SAYS Wundt, of Leipzig : “The innermost essence of morality is in ceaseless, never-ending effort.” Whether in the New Hebrides among recent converts from cannibalism, or in New England among descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers ; whether in the saint cultivating the garden of his soul, or in the reformer striving to purify society, real morality is seen to be essentially progressive, struggling for continuous betterment personally and socially, a dynamic spirit, essentially different from the static, stagnant conventionalism popularly called moral, content with the performance of actions reputed to be good. Stationary morality, declining constant effort to become better than one is, sitting down to rest and be thankful amid the existing wastes and burdens of society, while idly boasting that conditions are better than they were, is the anæmia out of which, till it be made an end of, moral crises will recur without end. Said the Bishop of Ripon : “Conventional

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standards operate as ethical narcotics." Precious products are they of past struggles for righteousness ; they are bulwarks against a relapse into barbarism ; but resting on them is palsying to the moral nerve that won them. Thomas Hill Green reminds us that the present level of morality would never have been reached, if the temper that now rests content with it had been universal. Says Professor Bowne : " Refusal to move onward is to be a traitor to the highest, and so, finally, to the good itself." The foremost ethical writers in Europe and America thus teach in unanimity. Just as a thing that seems to be a seed is not a real seed unless it is able to produce more seeds, so what professes to be morality is not real morality unless it is able to produce more morality. There is no more radical difference in the universe than that which exists between a dead form and a living. No duty is now more urgently incumbent on the teachers of churches than to make plain even to the wayfarer the unreality of the dead morality that deludes and contents him.

If this point is gained, all is gained. It is the key of the situation in a moral crisis. It is like the first and great commandment, in that it involves a second, by which its content is illuminated.

Real morality, always aspiring toward the moral ideal, is essentially social. Conventional morality, devitalized in its sterile content with the current code, is not social but individualistic. Both in the churches and among the masses merely this—to be free from private vices, to be honest, truthful, and industrious, faithful to one's family, kind to neighbours, and

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careful to keep on the windy side of the law, is accepted as the moral life, the whole of it. In this view the obligations of the other-regarding virtues are not wholly ignored, but are supposed to be discharged by occasional doles to charity, and by observance of social decencies and civilities ; the primacy is accorded to the self-regarding virtues. "Thy neighbour as thyself" is practically treated as a counsel of perfection. Men view it as a snow-clad Alpine summit, admired on the blue horizon afar from the common road, and forbidding except to the adventurous few.

But the worst mischiefs punish the abuse of nature. In the nature of things every legitimate business is a ministry to human want, a branch of social service. Society is a mutual benefit organization, citizenship a trusteeship, public office a public trust. In actual practice business is the pursuit of selfish interest, citizenship a private asset convertible to personal profit, public office a stepping-stone to private ends. Yet all this substitution of mastery for ministry, of self-seeking for social service, anti-social as it is, and therefore immoral, passes as compatible with a moral life. From this abuse of nature moral crises inevitably spring. We see its fruit to-day in practices so exorbitant as to make men think of devising new legal preventives ; but no preventive will meet the case that does not reach this root of all sorts of evil.

This must be attacked as it has never yet been. In the New Testament covetousness is put in the same black list as fornication. The testimony of the modern Church against it is mostly limited to the liturgical repetition of the Tenth Commandment,



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which should long ago have been expounded with the same breadth that Jesus gave, for example's sake, to the Sixth and the Seventh. But in the modern pulpit covetousness, the most paralyzing to the spiritual life of any sin, and yet of all sins the most respectable and deceptive in its disguise as thrift, has been one of the rarest themes. Here is need of the axe. In our present social perils the teacher of morality and of religion will do well to strike at the great lie which blinds men's consciences—that morality unsocialized is *morality*, that self-interested virtue satisfies the moral demand, that a life planned more for acquisition than for distribution can be a moral life; the great lie that is the tap-root of our social discords and dangers, that makes it possible for men steeped in anti-social principles and practices to enjoy social respectability, good standing in churches, and even honour as Christian philanthropists. Not till this monstrous fallacy is eradicated will much progress be made toward the grand desideratum which Roswell Hitchcock long ago stated as "the christianizing of Christendom," whose condition even now is closely parallel to what is recorded in the eighth century B.C. of those heathen colonists in the Holy Land, of whom it is said that they "feared Jehovah, and served their own gods."

Thus incontrovertible is the seeming paradox, that even in churches it is not yet understood as it should be what morality really is. Yet this is the fundamental question to which a moral crisis throws back all who would meet it adequately. So will the old Greek proverb be found true: "The beginning is

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half of the whole." Subordinate questions are easily settled when the fundamental delusion has been exposed; when real morality is seen to be other than the conventional, sterilized thing so-called, devoid of all aspiration toward the ideal; when the imposture has been unmasked which represents a hemisphere as the whole globe, pretending that the individualistic, unsocialized virtue of a life devoted to private interest is the moral life, whose hall-mark is its devotion to pursuit of the moral ideal, the righteousness of God.

Not less important is what now remains to be said. Let a clear perception of the fundamental reality be gained, and the illusion will vanish, which in most minds disjoins religion and morality with a false antithesis, pernicious to their common interest. In the Old Testament religion is defined in terms of righteousness,—the Biblical word for our modern term, morality. The Hebrew prophets treat religion and morality together as one thing. The Beatitudes of Jesus describe the Kingdom of the Spirit in an outline of moral character. St. Paul describes "the fruit of the Spirit" in the terms of moral virtues. Yet there are preachers who think of spirituality as something more divine than morality, although at the same time they regard God as the Moral Governor of the world, and recognize the perfection of Deity as consisting in moral attributes. Outside of the Church are many who deem religion optional for those that are inclined to it, and morality enough without it. Within the Church one hears much disparagement of "mere morality," as if there were

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any such thing. "Mere ethics" is still a current phrase, in which a smack of Cotton Mather's idea of ethics survives—"impiety reduced to the form of art." These contradictions, hardening the one class of people in irreligion, hardening the other class in incomplete religion, semi-moralized, spring from the same root—a false notion of what genuine morality is. The "mere morality" that contents the irreligious man, while it dissatisfies the healthy instinct of the religious man, is simply the conventional thing that exhausts itself in compliance with the popular code. The common error of both parties is in treating as real that which is not real. Only in common perception of the reality can their contradictions cease. The truth that ends their strife is, that religion and morality, though differing in aspect and emphasis—religion emphasizing thought and feeling, morality emphasizing will—are one. Real morality is essentially religious; religion, real only so far as moral.

"The moral ideal," says Wundt, "belongs to the realm of the infinite." In equivalent terms Jesus sums up his spiritual exposition of moral laws: "Ye shall be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Thus the modern ethicist and the Head of the Church concur in recognizing both moral and religious aspiration as directed alike toward the infinite, and therefore essentially one. The difference between real religion and real morality is simply the difference between the two sides of a coin; you cannot have the one without the other. They face differently, that is all; but they are fused together, they make up the one thing. What is it that we see in Jesus but just this—religion

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and morality fused in the unity of a holy enthusiasm for the righteousness of God? According to the indisputable maxim of Dean Fremantle, "Our knowledge of God is no greater than the reflection of it in our worldly relations," no man can be any more as a minister of religion than he is as a minister of the morality which is the divinely enjoined liturgy of religion. The two cannot be separate in preaching any more than in living. We separate them as St. Paul did not. Mark how the theological climax of his letter to the Romans lands the reader at chapter xii. on the lofty highlands of the moral life of those that walk with God. See also how the sublime Christology of the first half of his letter to the Colossians is made the basis for the elaborate ethical superstructure erected in the second half.

What, now, is the most common cause of the religious atrophy from which so many nominally Christian people suffer? It is their mistaken satisfaction with an unreal morality, non-vital, non-progressive, as unlike the real as a cross-section of a tree is unlike the growing tree. But this is precisely the stationary morality of paganism, and such is the inseparable unity of religion and morality that a pagan morality atrophies the Christianity that embraces it. Pagan Greece and Rome have transmitted to us not only their words for morality, but the very sense which they attached to the words, as signifying conformity to the *ethos*, the *mores*, of the time being, the current popular code of virtue. The distinctively Christian conception of morality is dynamic, derived

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from Jesus' view of its aim as an ideal, the flying goal of continual pursuit, the holy brotherhood of perfected individuals in the City of God, as a perfected society fulfilling the righteous will of the Heavenly Father, the object and the incentive of their aspiration and endeavour. In Jesus' rebuking questions, "Do not even the Gentiles so?" "What do ye more than others?"—in his emphatic warning, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," is a distinct and uncompromising condemnation of the morality that is not really moral because of its torpid acquiescence in moral imperfection, because of its lack of the dynamic heart of morality, its essential element of aspiration toward the better and the best.

"Christian civilization," says the author of "The Religion of Christ," "has always preferred the pagan to the distinctly Christian virtues, finding it easier to worship Jesus as the Son of God than to follow him as the Son of man." Even now the fundamental teaching of Jesus remains for the most part like the lamp in his parable, put under the bed. The static notion of morality that ruled in ancient paganism still dominates the common mind, and widely infects the churches with its false and dangerous antithesis between morality and religion, putting asunder what God has joined together. Because of this basal fallacy Christianity remains but partially moralized, and so far is partly anti-Christian in its accommodation to the way of a world which, ever since the days of the troglodytes, has been ruled by its preference of

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competition in getting benefit to that competition in giving benefit which Jesus' Golden Rule enjoins. Hence, and not from any innovations in theology or Biblical criticism, is what Professor Ladd, of Yale, points to as a glaring anomaly in the body that bears the name of the Supreme Moral Teacher—the “relatively low and nerveless” moral condition of the churches. Hence the moral crises that recur from time to time. There is no final salvation from them till the churches understand and teach the first principles of the religious morality and the moralized religion of their Head. As set forth in his Sermon on the Mount, they are the indispensable introduction to the sublime theology of St. Paul and St. John. The church that does not fully adopt the one cannot reasonably expect to convince the world of the other. And so the recent saying of the devout preacher in the London City Temple is indubitably true: “The supreme spiritual need to-day is a strenuous morality.”

## Self-Realization, Not Self-Denial





## IV

### SELF-REALIZATION, NOT SELF-DENIAL<sup>1</sup>

THAT Christianity requires sacrifice is a truism. Its symbol, the Cross, proclaims it. This sacrifice is usually regarded as sacrifice of self. It may be questioned whether a deeper insight justifies this estimate. Faithful Christian living must forgo some desires, and so Christianity is commonly regarded as a self-denying religion. Whether it is really such demands inquiry. Are its denials denials of self, or of what is not the real self? It is more truly regarded and more deservedly represented as the religion whose innermost purpose is self-realization.

The sum of Jesus' teaching is that God is every man's Father, that every man is to live as a child of God should live, and that he himself is every man's pattern of such a life. Such a life he represents as a life of service at the altar of human needs, where the stronger must serve the weaker, even as he gives his life "a ransom for many." Whatever else this may mean, it has certainly been illustrated in multitudes of noble lives redeemed from low and selfish ends by the inspirations caught from him. Just such lives he declared it his purpose to inspire to the fullest. "I am come that they may have life, and may have

<sup>1</sup> From *The Homiletic Review*, August, 1904.

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it abundantly." The sum of his precepts is, Believe in me ; follow me ; count well the cost beforehand, but be assured of my joy, my peace, no loss in the way I lead you on. He never speaks of having denied himself anything, but counts it his daily food to do the will and finish the work of his Father. To speak of the life of Jesus as one of self-denial or self-sacrifice is to speak from the point of view that the lazy savage, who said, " It costs too much to be a white man," took of the life of the industrious farmer or mechanic. It is a life of sublime self-realization as a man among men that Jesus lived. It is in leading us into just such a life that he is " the captain of our salvation." The salvation contemplated by Christianity as embodied in Jesus is simply the ideal self-realization of man as a child of God.

The weakness of Christianity to-day is that it is not regarded in this its true character by the mass of its representatives. Salvation is often thought of rather as an escape from the pains of God's displeasure, conditioned on abandoning things that displease God. Many a young person thus views the matter : " If I become a Christian, I must give up this ; I cannot do that." Looking at the Church collectively, many a man outside has cause to say, " What *do ye* more than others ? " It is not abstinence but achievement that attracts men and wins a following. Christianity can convince the world only when manifested in its true character as the way of self-realization. For self-realization is the grand object toward which, however misconceived, in ways however mistaken, all men are naturally bent.

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The world's general mistake, however, is in its low notion of the self that needs realization. Here one may recall Aristotle's saying, that what is first in the order of nature is last in the order of time, and St. Paul's saying: "First the psychical [A.V., "natural"], afterwards the spiritual." Naturally we are first aware of our separate needs, and crave our individual satisfactions; but our last discovery is that these are essential and inseparable components of social needs and satisfactions; that is, if we acquire a civilized regard and rational preference for the permanent rather than the fleeting. Well for us, well for the Commonwealth, if at length we learn that the individual is but a cell in the social body; that the health of the whole depends on the health of the cellular tissue we term "society"; that one morbid cell is a centre of infection which menaces the health of the social organism. The proverb, "One man is no man," meaning the impossibility of a hermit or any completely isolated individual realizing a truly human life, carries the corollary that the single separate self, seeking strictly individual satisfactions together with those of only the extensions of self which are found in one's own family or party or social set, is not the real and fully human self. This is a broadly social self, serving and served by the whole social body of which it is a member, realizing itself in full development and permanent satisfaction only as it devotes itself to the service of the body by which it is served. Here we find the cardinal truth of Christianity as the religion of humanity, that self-realization is only through the self-surrender of the part to the whole, the self-

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devotion of the member to its body, which is less properly called self-sacrifice. Jesus therefore said, "He that loseth his life shall find it." The realization of the distinctively human or social self is through the sacrifice of its competitor, the unsocial, separate, so-called self that is not the real self. The life that Jesus speaks of losing is a narrower and lower life than the life which such losing is the condition of finding.

"Live according to nature" was a cardinal maxim of the Stoic philosophy, in which the wisdom of ancient Greece came nearest to Christianity. Yet Christian thought has objected to this; and why? Because Christian thought till recently has taken the low view of human nature which such a term as self-denial implies. This term wrongly identifies our nature and self with the brute underpinning rather than the human superstructure in which is the distinctive life of humanity. If we adopt the idea of human nature which Jesus' cardinal doctrine of God as our Father implies, the Stoic maxim is thoroughly right. One here recalls Emerson's remark, that our consciousness is a sliding scale, which at one time seems to identify us with the divine Spirit, and at another time with the very flesh of our body. Our prime need, if we would be fully human, is to cultivate the higher consciousness, that we are all God's children, all brothers in him. What, indeed, is human in contrast with animal nature, except that it is distinctively spiritual, carrying, indeed, an animal inheritance for its service, but endowed with divine possibilities for its cynosure? This treasure, as St. Paul tells us, we have "in earthen

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vessels." It is not the animal, psychical vessel, but the spiritual treasure in it that is real humanity, as distinct from the brute stock it budded from. This is the real nature of which the Stoic maxim should be understood ; this the nature according to which man's true life must be lived ; this the true self, begotten of the Spirit in the likeness of the All-Father ; this that demands expression, satisfaction, full realization. Duly emphasizing *this* self in living according to *this* nature, such terms as self-denial and self-sacrifice lose all significance to the aspiring soul. They drop out of one's vocabulary as out of Jesus' thought, because of their implicit falsehood ; because through a trick of words they tend to reverse one's thought from its right direction, looking backward instead of forward, tending to defeat true self-realization by fixing the eye, like the Hebrews in the wilderness, on the fleshpots of Egypt, rather than on the glory of the land of promise.

We hear a lament that the world is dominated by self-interest. The lament misses the mark. We cannot have too much interest for our real self. It is by a low notion of self that the world is dominated. A man beguiles himself into fancying himself as naturally at odds with other selves, and needing the taking in rather than the giving out of benefits ; bound to accumulate goods, not to impart good ; enriched by possession, not by distribution ; satisfied with perishable and transitory holdings—a notion true enough of the earthly vessel, false of the heavenly treasure in it, the true self, that rusts away if not employed in profitable outlay. Well were it to be dominated by

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self-interest, were this an interest for the realization of the really human self, whose real interest is one with that of every and all selves, the social, co-operating, ministering, brotherly self, to whose satisfactions all minister in degree as it ministers to them ; whose receiving increases with its giving ; whose joys expand with its services ; whose expectation can never be cut off, because it never cuts off its own interest from the common interest of humanity. Here is the point where the initial sentence of Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom, "change your minds" (most imperfectly translated by the word "repent"), pricks the grand fallacy of the world, and bids men cultivate the higher, human consciousness, as if to say, Be your real selves. Here, too, is the point where the Greek maxim, "Know thyself," presses home the highest wisdom of the ancient world. Make no mistake as to what your true self is. Understand yourself, if you would rightly direct your life, and save yourself from self-defeat.

Of his true self no man can make too much. It is his sacred trust from God, and for it is his prime responsibility to God. Jesus' rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," implicitly makes right love of self the norm of right love of the neighbour. One must not love his neighbour in the foolish way in which a man often loves himself, but as wisely as he ought to love himself. And so when we hear Jesus say, "Deny thyself and follow me," we must not fail to understand him as stooping to use the world's language so as to be understood by men who have only the low notion of self, that certainly was not his.



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To obey this precept is simply to abandon selfishness as fatal to a right self-love,—courses as far apart as is the animal from the spiritual. God certainly loves himself, for he loves what he is, the eternal Goodness. Jesus not only loved the world, but loved himself, loved himself for others' sake. "For their sakes," said he, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." Not for the world only, but also for fidelity to his own nature, he endured the cross. Herbert Spencer, in the famous fourteenth chapter of his "Data of Ethics," has shown that in the highest range of the moral life love of self and love of others blend in one. In such self-love as that of Jesus the selfish antagonisms of "mine" and "thine"—not Christian words, said Luther, certainly not Christian in their common use—have ceased to be. In its goal of self-realization through the reciprocal love and service in which each seeks another's good as his own, is fulfilled the prayer of Jesus for his friends, "That they may all be one."

This is the path pursued by the great saints, heroes, and benefactors; this the way which the world's admiration of them attests as the way of the true self, and of "the life which is life indeed." What the world on its low level shuns as self-denial they pursue on the uplands of thought as self-realization, and so enter into glory among men and angels. The Gospel of Jesus' preaching, the Gospel of their obedience, is well called in Scripture "the glorious Gospel," for it turns men from the shame and sorrow of self-defeat to the glory of self-realization as the children of God. Here we come to the first spiritual principle.

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in the higher consciousness of our inheritance in God, obedient to the heavenly vision of the divine possibilities of the spark of his own nature which God has lodged within us, to be fostered into the flame that transfigures the earthly into the heavenly. But as a veil is said to have hid the glory of Moses' face when he came down from the mount, where he had communed with God, so a veil is cast over the glory of Jesus' Gospel by calling it a Gospel of self-denial; and so the aspiring, virile, heroic tone that attracts strong natures is effeminated.

A fundamental fallacy of Christian thought has been in conceiving of human personality as essentially apart from God; in speaking of "*mere man*," as if any such reality existed, and of human strength as all one's own; in exalting to the dignity of the human self its servant, the animal nature, with its desires and passions; in forgetting the divine germ which is the real core of our humanity, capacitated for eternal life, if only discerned and cultivated. A momentous mistake—this separating of self from God! Our finite life is ensphered in his infinite life. Nothing can be external to God. "In him we live," said St. Paul. But how feebly does the Church appropriate this august thought as the radiating centre of its faith—man in God, and God in man! A man's conception of what he is powerfully influences what he does, as the French proverb, *noblesse oblige*, implies. A king's son, a beggar's son, act as what each knows himself to be. The virtue at the base of all other virtues is a rational self-respect. From this all high endeavour springs. Without this there can



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be no self-realization deserving the name. A proper presentation of Jesus' glorious Gospel aims, first of all, to inspire the needed self-respect that is based on the higher human consciousness of sonship to God, which the Gospel appeals to ; it aims to make a man fully aware of what he is, of the divine element within him, suppressed and abused as it may be ; of his real nature and its capacity for grace and glory, as illuminated in the world's immortal honour-roll, and by the Name at its head "that is above every name." Even then there will be many who despise their birthright—sensual or slothful souls. Doubtless there will be many who must be brought to their senses and themselves in other ways, as by fear and pain and loss ; for "God fulfils himself in many ways." Many are the levels of mankind in the uneven world, lower grades of development, and higher ; many supine, fewer aspiring souls. But the aspiring must not miss the characteristic note of the Gospel, appealing peculiarly to them to be their true selves.

In the Church and outside of it there is no more urgent religious need to-day than that this faintly-heard keynote of the Gospel of the eternal life be strongly struck, so that the flame of aspiration may be kindled in many in whom to our eyes no spark of it appears. We must often repeat Whittier's lines :

All flesh is frail ; all dust is weak ;  
Be thou the true man thou dost seek.

We must often say with Professor Royce, "To assert the true self is to be saved." *John*

In the narrow evangelicalism of former days this note was too faintly heard. The lower, non-social,

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non-human self, akin to the brute, received too much recognition; the higher self, the social and distinctively human self, akin to God, received too little; perhaps because it is infantile, and the other is adult, and it is the custom of the world to notice adults more than children. In short, the true emphasis of the Gospel was lost, and this is what now must be restored. The higher human consciousness, feeble though it be, must be roused and fostered. What the true self and true self-realization are must be cleared from a cloud of misunderstanding and fallacy, and the way of the life worth living must be exhibited in all its alluring glory, appealing to a man not with "Deny thyself," but rather with "*Be thyself.*" That the effort to be one's true self involves denials and sacrifices of some sort, not really *self*-denial, is so in accord with universal experience in every line of effort that it may once for all be faced at the outset as a fact that goes without saying. Whatever any man aspires to, nothing else attracts the mind set upon its chosen goal. No man counts it self-denial to cast aside what hinders the attainment of his prize. And so neither Jesus, nor the saintly, beneficent, heroic lives that have won lasting honour in the world by following Jesus in his way of self-realization, have counted whatever it cost them as anything but—to use St. Paul's strong word—"dung" in comparison with what they strove for.

Yet in this common feature of the experience of every kind of human struggle for every kind of good, there is also a vast difference to be noted. What the man of the world sacrifices in pursuit of his objects

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is sacrificed for the sake of having and holding what he can have and hold for only a little while. It is for the sake of becoming and being what it is in them to become and be, both now and for ever, that Jesus and all who follow him sacrifice, not themselves, indeed, but whatever stands in their way. This, then, is the great word of Jesus' Gospel of the Fatherhood of God : Become as I am. *Be thyself.* Be sons and daughters of your Father, God. We must believe in God. But we must also believe in ourselves as being really more than ourselves, because God himself is in his temple of the God-seeking, God-consecrated soul. Only when we believe fully in God within us do we believe as we ought in God above us. We then are strong in him because he is strong in us. Our real self is essentially one with him. True self-realization is in the realizing of this truth, and in the appropriating of its power to overcome all evil with good through the divine growth within us of the life that is eternal. Wherefore let us be ourselves, for only as we realize ourselves can we realize our unity with God in the profoundly ethical sense of Jesus' saying, "I and my Father are one."



## Our Great Social Heresy



# V

## OUR GREAT SOCIAL HERESY <sup>1</sup>

GEORGE ELIOT long ago remarked that the consideration of interests must give place to that of functions. This principle has familiar illustrations in the compulsory service of juries, and the subpoenas of witnesses in courts. Legislatures and courts have extended it in assertions of public rights in railways privately built and owned. It awaits still further extensions that are certain to come. It phrases in modern form the basic social principle laid down in Jesus' saying: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister"—not to be served, but to serve—a saying as applicable to every man as to him.

But the American mind—to say nothing of European democrats—has long faced the opposite way. Our Declaration of Independence opens with an assertion that men "are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Passing by the fact that the criminal courts daily pronounce these "inalienable" rights justly alienated, one may grant that men have been thus endowed, but must ask whether

<sup>1</sup> An Address before the Women's League for Political Education, New York, 1897.

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this endowment is conditioned or unconditioned ; whether it is acquired by nature in birth, or by the fulfilment of natural functions as serviceable members of the social body. This is the point at which fatal error begins.

Of course, it was and always will be necessary, till struggles against oppression and tyranny have gained the goal of freedom, to insist upon certain rights as of prime consequence for the fulfilment of normal human functions. Yet this insistence is simply such leaning against a fierce wind as is needful to prevent being overblown. When the blast has ceased, the leaning should cease ; it is not the natural attitude. That it has not ceased, that the average citizen still harps on interests and rights, with scant concern for functions and duties, is the present peril of democracy, a displacement of its moral centre of gravity which threatens the stability of the commonwealth. "The doctrine of individual rights," said Mazzini, "is mighty to break chains ; it has no power to knit bonds of co-operation and love."

There are two theories of society—the atomic or sand-heap theory, and the organic or member-of-a-body theory. The atomic theory regards society as consisting merely of individuals bunched together by force of circumstances, but already the possessors of rights, to guarantee which they agree to form a society. This was the famous "social contract" doctrine of Rousseau, whose shaping influence appears both in our Declaration of Independence and in certain provisions of our national Constitution, which apparently



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ban and bar the demands of political socialism. Rousseau's doctrine has long been relegated to the realm of fiction, but its radical fallacy still infects the popular mind with notions of natural rights existing independently of social functions. A man is widely believed to have a natural and inalienable right to decline to concern himself with civic interests, to live an idle life in the pursuit of pleasure high or low, to enclose as private grounds as much of the earth as he can pay for, to aggrandize his share of the nation's wealth illimitably, and to transmit his entire holdings at death to whomsoever he will. As to this illusion, Professor Ritchie has pointedly observed that the common appeal to natural right, varying with the habitat of the claimant—Chinaman, Turk, or American—merely expresses an individual judgment of what it should include. From this individual mind,

Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,

we turn to the masters of thought, whom the world has hearkened to in ancient and in modern times.

These regard society as an organism consisting of many members knit together in the unity of a common life, whose soundness and permanence depend on what the individual members, each active in his proper function, severally contribute thereto, and in which the health or disease of any member affects the entire body. This, the teaching both of ancient philosophy and of modern science, is also the teaching familiar to thoughtful readers of the New Testament.

Man, said Aristotle, is "naturally civic." A man independent of society must be, said he, "either a

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god or a beast." That the individual can have no real personal interest separable from the social interest was affirmed by that Marcus Aurelius whom a great historian has called "the whitest soul" in the ancient heathen world: "What is not good for the swarm is not good for the bee." The independent individual either does not exist, or, if existing as a hermit or anchorite, is an abnormal man. "One man," said Pascal—*i.e.*, a solitary man,—"*is no man.*" Man did not make society, it has well been said; it is society that makes man. From this primal fact of human nature as essentially a social and civic nature, it follows, as Thomas Hill Green writes, that no human rights appear except as the individual man is "(1) a member of a society, and (2) of a society in which some common good is recognized by the members as the ideal good for each of them."

What, now, is the first fact evinced by this natural relation of the individual to society as a member of the body? No right at all, except a right to fulfil his proper function as such, and this initial right itself grows out of the primordial duty of fidelity to the social function imposed by nature. The first concern of the individual is to co-operate in nourishing the organic life and welfare of the society into which he was born, and in which he finds security and opportunity already provided for his benefit. A pity it is that this is fairly realized only when an armed enemy invades. Then self-interest is socialized, and self-assertion submerged in self-devotion to the common weal. The enemy subdued, all this is changed. The time of really greatest social peril is in periods of

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peace, when no external pressure enforces to social unity, and co-operation in social duty is superseded by clamour and conflict for selfish interests.

In the fulfilment of the primordial duty into which every one of us is born rights immediately arise, and only so. The most obvious of these is the right to serve the community. That this right is often cruelly refused the bitter cry of the unemployed in every centre of the highest present civilization needs no corroborative witness. It is for the statesman to find a way to vindicate this right, whenever frustrated by the glut in the so-called labour market which a too individualistic use of the economic law of demand and supply periodically causes. The teacher of ethics must insist on the principle which economics, as the housekeeper of the ethical community, is bound to apply. Enough here to observe the hint given by the storage reservoirs which distribute in dry seasons the irrigation desperately needed then, and only then. There is always a large variety of deferable but desirable work for community uses to which surpluses of labouring force are capable of application.

Equally obvious is the further right:—every one who loyally fulfils the duty of a social partner thereby acquires the right to demand that every other one shall be held to the same—otherwise he would be unjustly burdened with the maintenance of drones. Without work neither life, nor society, nor human development is possible. The drone is therefore not only his own enemy, but a foe to all his social partners, a parasite whom, *qua* parasite, it is their common right to exterminate—a right to be enforced not only against the

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vulgar vagabond, but as well against the gilded sybarite.

But what is the rational object of work? Certainly not mere wealth, then more wealth, then wealth limitless. Wealth is but the material basis of civilization, and real civilization, as Matthew Arnold said, is not the external equipage and polish but the humanization of man. The really human as distinct from the merely animal interest of work for wealth is to win leisure to rear upon this material basis of life its proper superstructure of mental and moral development in the culture of intellectual power and rational feeling. Sane work, as distinct from insane, has for its supreme object the making of man, not of money. Out of such work for leisure to secure these fruits of it grows another right—the right of every faithful worker to share equitably in these fruits. Such is the point of view from which Bishop Westcott said at the Anglican Church Congress in 1895 that the relation of a wage-earner to a wage-payer is not the highest ideal of Christian economy; but that we are to look forward to a time when each citizen wholly devoting himself to his vocation for the common good shall thereby acquire a right to participate in all the fulness of the common wealth.

Rights and duties appear thus to be related to each other like the two sides of a coin, inseparably attached. Whatever a man is morally obligated to do he has a moral, if not a legal, right to do, and *only moral rights are natural rights*. The primordial duty of work carries with it the primordial right to work—the

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right to serve the community in some form of useful activity—"the most imprescriptible" of rights, said Turgot, the finance minister of Louis XVI. For thus only can the right be secured which the American jurist, Francis Lieber, declared to be the only natural right existing—the right of a man to fulfil the nature of a man. But this is simply the fulfilment of his proper function as an active social partner, a co-operating member of the social body. In short, to the truly social spirit rights are duties, and duties are rights.

The primary concern of ethics, however, is not with rights, but with duties, inseparably connected and interdependent in moral unity though they are. Well, therefore, do the great ethical teachers agree in assigning priority to the duties rather than to the rights of man—a principle which leads straight into moral socialism. Could moral socialism only be admitted to full practice, economic individualism, as Bosanquet has said, would go well enough in yoke with it. But while the conditioned rights are achieved only as the conditioning duties are fulfilled, we may still agree with the men of 1776 in viewing them as God-given, though not in the way they thought of them as an unconditioned endowment at birth. God-given they are indeed, since God-given is the nature that achieves them with its God-given promptings and powers in fulfilling the duties we are bound to by being born into God's world in the lap of a social life which we begin in debt for everything there found ready for the use of hand or mind. If we speak of

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them as natural rights, it must be as only potentially natural till fulfilment of the natural duties conditioning them has made them actual. In this Republic we claim self-government as a natural right. But, in disallowing it to children till the so-called age of discretion is reached, we have glimpsed the truth that natural rights are not unconditioned. To think the contrary concerning whatever is claimed as a natural right is the great social heresy of our time, bearing all manner of evil fruit, whose leaves are the bane of nations. The moral claim to a right must be validated by its connection with a duty fulfilled ; else it is as worthless as the coupon which reads " not good if detached " from the railway ticket which validates it. On this principle Dr. Gladden affirmed, years ago, that there is no moral right to property except as morally used—substantially what Wyclif affirmed in his tractate *De Dominio*. Such a doctrine, of course, raises a storm of indignation in certain quarters ;

No rogue e'er felt the halter draw  
With good opinion of the law.

It should be noted here that the principle just stated does not fail to cover the infant as well as the adult members of the social body. Even in its unconsciousness and dependence the infant fulfils its natural function as the peculiar bond of family unity, and the pledge of hope for the permanence of the State. Thus it also begins to acquire rights.

The present need of all citizens of a free State is to ponder the saying of Professor McCunn : " Democracy has missed its mark till it has brought the citizen

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something more substantial than his rights." The assertion of rights, necessary in the past, may be necessary in the present and the future ; but, except as subordinated and subsidiary to the assertion and fulfilment of the duties that are prior, it can never knit together the members of the social body. When the partners in a firm are looking out each for himself, the firm has become infirm. As Professor Nash has observed, covetousness is rightly put by Holy Scripture beside adultery in the list of cardinal sins, because each works social disruption. Covetousness breaks up civic society, the Commonwealth, as adultery breaks up domestic society, the family.

The same flaw threatens democracy now of which Mazzini warned his compatriots struggling in 1849 for the liberation of Italy. "I declared," said he, "that there had long been a divorce between the religious and the political idea, between the Church and humanity ; that this divorce was fatal . . . that it was necessary at every cost to reunite earth to heaven, our earthly life to the conception of the life eternal, man to God, his Father and Teacher." This fatal divorce between the religious and the political idea—the religious insisting first on duties, the political insisting first on rights with an exclusive emphasis—is conspicuous in our imperfectly moralized society. This anti-religious, as well as anti-philosophic and anti-scientific social heresy—that rights are prior to and independent of duties, that they are given by birth instead of being acquired by dutiful employment of our natural powers in the fulfilment of our natural social functions—still blinds and paralyses human



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sensibilities in a shocking degree to the social waste and misery that disgrace our nominally Christian civilization. It is responsible for the vast inhumanity chargeable to our present economic system. Pronouncing this system "guilty of robbery and confiscation of what is the workman's share of the riches of the land," the British Chancellor of the Exchequer said publicly in 1908: "The day will come, and it is not distant, when England will shudder at its toleration of this state of things when it was rolling in wealth." The case is not essentially different in these United States. That great Lutheran theologian, Richard Rothe, taking the same ground as Mazzini, said many years ago: "Christianity is essentially a political principle, and a political power. It is constructive of the State, and bears within itself the power of forming the State, and of developing it to its full completion." The truth of this has been repeatedly illustrated in England by the influence of "the Nonconformist conscience" on public policy, and in this country by the occasional massing of churches here and there to suppress certain vices by effective law. But the religion of Jesus, implicated in a paralysing alliance with an economic system based on covetous self-interest, seems to fare like the fiery oxygen which in combination with cold iron changes from inflammability to rust and inertness.

Any solution of threatening social problems that is to be both effective and pacific—if such can be—can come only through a baptism of the philosophy of social welfare that the world has heard and neglected for more than twenty centuries with the moral energy



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of the Spirit of Jesus, its divine Exemplar, transforming its sages into saints, its lecturers into inspired prophets, its disciples into heroic apostles. Now is the word of Jesus being fulfilled: "Days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man"—those days when the faith of Jesus in times of social strain and peril like our own, amid the antagonisms of exaggerated wealth and atrophied poverty, inaugurated, as Professor Hatch has shown, a social movement as well as a religious revival, religiously fulfilling the mission of the Son of man "*not to be served, but to serve.*" But, said Jesus, "ye shall not see it." The city over whose approaching ruin he wept had committed herself to the rapids too far to escape the cataract. That prophecy stands to warn our modern society, nominally Christian, but torn by conflicts of selfish interests, gospelling the "heathen," but guarding the aggrandizement and security of propertied interests more jealously than the life, health, and human development of its poorer and weaker members. The word of our salvation is the Gospel of the Son of man, with its declaration, not of rights, but of duties. The great need of this day of practicable salvation is of prophets to preach that word, of hearers to spread it, and of believers to practise it.



## The Moral Use of Property



## VI

### THE MORAL USE OF PROPERTY <sup>1</sup>

STRANGE it seems that, fifty years after Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley preached social Christianity, any Christian minister should inveigh against Socialism as anti-Christian. As well call democracy anti-Christian, for this as well as Socialism has a *sans culotte* variety, and even of religion there are kinds that are immoral. There is a school of Socialists whose motto is that "property is robbery," and whose purpose is to abolish private capital. The school of Maurice and Kingsley reply to this in the words of Bishop C. W. Stubbs, that "the real cure for our social and economic distresses is not the distribution of wealth, but its moralization." The moral obligations which are inseparable from the possession of wealth are too commonly supposed to be discharged by generosity and charity.

The fault of substituting generosity and charity for social justice grows from the false assumption that what is legally owned is morally all one's own. As against any individual claimant it may be all one's own, but not as against the collective claimant called Society, the divinely instituted partnership to which we all belong. It is a curious perversion which

<sup>1</sup> From *The Outlook*, September 5, 1905.

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to-day twists the question with which the vineyard owner in Jesus' parable asserted his right to be generous, paying a day's wage for an hour's work—"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"—into an assertion of the right to be selfish and even extortionate, *e.g.*, taking advantage from a tariff law to make one's countrymen pay twelve dollars a ton more for steel rails than the foreigner, and exploiting a legal opportunity to claim seventy-five thousand dollars for a share in five months' service in a joint receivership.

How deeply the fallacy of an unlimited ownership of what we call our own has infected the popular mind appeared in the remark of a prominent publisher, some twenty years ago, that he thought Shakespeare's heirs still entitled to enjoy copyright in his works. The limitation of copyright to a term of years justly recognizes the fact that society holds a moral lien on the literary craftsman's product for the material he has borrowed from the common stock accumulated since the invention of alphabetic writing. The same fact holds in every other line of production. "All past men," said Carlyle, "work with the modern man." The first fire-maker, the first iron-smelter, the inventor of such primitive mechanical appliances as the lever and the wheel, the inventor of the Arabic numerals in which accounts are kept, must not be omitted in the long list of contributors to the common stock of powers of which the modern steel-maker avails himself. The race whose toil has accumulated them may justly demand its royalty for their use. It is simply common sense to say that so far as anything

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not one's own has gone into one's product, the product is not all his own ; there is a lien upon it ; something must come out of it. This lien is not discharged by tax-paying, which merely keeps things going in order and safety. More than this is due for the use of the social plant set up for us to work with. For this every user of it is a debtor to his silent partner, the community. What is morally his own is what he calls his own, *minus* this debt.

To recognize this morally limited ownership of "our own" is the prime requisite for that moral use of wealth which Christian Socialists, like Maurice and Kingsley, oppose to the demand of the politicals for its abolition, or distribution, or nationalization. In claiming a right to do as he will with his own, no moral man desires more than his moral right. The legal limit of right is steadily contracting toward the moral boundary. Democracy had to begin with assertions of individual right against tyranny. It can endure only by taking security against the growth of new tyranny out of unbridled claims of individual right. It had to begin with the claim, "I am as good as you." It can endure only by granting, in deed, as well as in word, "You are as good as I." Hence have already sprung many economic, educational, and sanitary limitations upon individual claims. In just the degree that individual right goes free of the claims of social right is the stability of democracy insecure.

Extreme Socialism, which would curb the exaggeration of private interests by putting all business under public management, would burn the house to drive out

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the rats. Its suppression of individual initiative and freedom cuts the present motor nerves of social progress. Admirably as it might work in a perfectly moralized society, the best society now existing on earth is far too imperfectly moralized to bear the moral strain of it. Extreme individualism, on the other hand, demands the freedom of the unleashed hound to run down and devour his prey. As the stability of the solar system is in the equilibrium of the centripetal and the centrifugal forces, so the stability of democracy is in the equilibrium of individualism and socialism, centred in the principle of ownership morally limited—a principle apparent upon any serious reflection on the interdependence of men. One need not be marooned on an uninhabited island to realize the helplessness of an isolated individual, or the reasonableness, amid the well-defended, well-provided life secured by social co-operation, of St. Paul's exhortation to "thanksgiving for all men." The proper practical form of such thanksgiving is in honouring the social debt due to the community of co-operating men.

The American youth enters active life a member of a society which has made for him out of a wilderness a rich country, has secured precious rights for him at large cost of treasure, toil, and blood, has accumulated for him stores of gainful knowledge and power, has trained steam and electricity to serve him, has given him an education costing much more than his parents paid for him. Where his predecessors cleared the forest, and defended their settlement from the savage, the open doors of an industry, an art, and a commerce he had no share in creating invite him to share freely



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in rich opportunities. One who stands thus on the shoulders of others, and plucks from the top of the tree its ripest fruit, and calls it all his own, needs to remind himself how it came to his hand. Certainly it is his "own" rather than the "own" of any other one man. Society permits him for the present to call it his own by a legal right which it has created, and so may modify when it will; but his own by moral right, except in part, it certainly is not. He has produced it by using the plant of a civilization created by the social partnership. For what society has put in society is entitled to take out proportionately to the product he has garnered from the common field. The recently introduced inheritance taxes are an incipient and partial application of this principle.

Our conceptions both of charity and of justice need revision. What the wealthy as a class bestow as charity is but a fraction of what would be, as Immanuel Kant long ago observed, simply a just return to society for their use of the social field and plant in fortune-making. When our present "embryonic morality," as Professor Bowne calls it, comes to adolescence, this will be confessed. All reputable economists now agree that the equitable distribution of the enormously increased wealth produced by the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century is the most baffling problem of their science. What the State can do toward its solution may be doubted. It is not doubtful that the Church can do much toward it by sharpening moral discrimination between what is and what is not strictly one's own in social equity, although one's own in law. The spirit of Christianity

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in St. Paul asks, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Confucianism declares, "Religion is reciprocity." *Meum* and *tuum* may be, as Luther said, "not Christian words." But *meum* and *nostrum* are such, and will be shown as such in that just distribution between individual and social rights through which the moral use of property will bring into being the ideally co-operative society of the future. Reformers are now talking of the need of setting a legal limit to the accumulation of private property. But the social danger apprehended from unlimited fortunes needs no surer safeguard than an unlimitedly moral use of fortunes.

# The Ethical Significance of Money



## VII

### THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MONEY <sup>1</sup>

THERE are two points of view in which the ethical significance of money is discovered. The one shows money as a *machine* of Protean power, both constructive and destructive, and needing safeguards accordingly ; the other, as a *measure* of services given and received in a just and equal exchange. To the latter of these two we must limit attention now, viz., that money is in its very design a measure of service given and received in equality of exchange.

We often hear one say, " I will do as much for you some time." In this phrase we express the common consciousness that a service received must be balanced by an equal service given. But this simple exchange of equal services is far short of supplying all the needs of a highly specialized social system. Like primitive exchange by barter, it is mostly superseded by the use of the common medium of exchange called money. By this services are estimated on a scale of innumerable gradations from a cent upward, and thereby the inhabitants of all the continents are made reciprocally serviceable in a commonwealth of mutual interest and benefits. The dollar I pay to the man who cleans

<sup>1</sup> From *The Outlook*, June 20, 1903, as expanded into an address at the seventh annual meeting of the New York State Conference of Religion, November, 1906.

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my windows, the share of the five dollars I pay for my hat, which goes to each producer of the utilities it embodies, is really an order for that amount of service to the bearer to balance the service that has been performed for me. This is the ethical significance of every piece of money that passes from hand to hand.

Adam Smith, father of modern political economy, said : " A guinea may be considered as a bill for a certain quantity of necessities or conveniences upon all the tradesmen of the neighbourhood." In other words, a sum of money, large or small, is *an order payable to the bearer for a proportionate amount of service*. Men wish to have these orders presented to them, that they may make a living by filling them. This conception of money is the fundamental requisite for its ethical treatment. It was remarked by Mr. Gladstone that a man's mental and moral character is largely revealed in the way he deals with money.

The sentiment of honour still rules in the simple primitive exchange of service between man and man. Self-respect scorns to receive service *as service* without full requital. But when the time and toil and fatigue involved in service are screened from observation and conscience by the dollar held close to the eye, the point of honour is lost out of mind ; the full requital is not thought of. The man who would despise himself did he not balance every good turn done him with a good turn equivalent, hugs himself for the largest income from the smallest output. If he can make the output fictitious instead of real by " watered " stock, the returns from which, instead of being the earnings of labour crystallized in capital, are the tribute of un-

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requited human sweat, he congratulates himself the more. The amount of *fictitious* capital getting dividends for the United States Steel Corporation has been carefully figured as five hundred millions. What does this mean for multitudes? Higher railroad rates, or higher rentals in costlier buildings, or minimum wages for employees.

Most people think of money simply as a means for getting themselves served with whatever they desire. Everybody knows that he cannot, except by robbery, get the coveted money-order for service without some giving of service, more or less, real or fictitious. But to care more for getting the money than for giving its full equivalent in service is to have started on the down grade to robbery in a predatory state of mind. That money, when not the gift of affection or honour, is held by no *moral* right, except as earned by a proportionate amount of service, is an elementary moral truth. In defiance of it an enormous amount of predatory wealth has been accumulated in recent years.

According to a carefully written financial article in *The New York Times* (1902), this non-ethical conception of money has already generated monstrous enormities. The syndicate that launched the Steel Trust, with the hundred millions of "water" said to have been added by it to the aggregate of capital and "water" in all its component corporations, is stated to have received forty million dollars for that service. It must be a hardy and daring imagination that can dream of any real service rendered to the world by that operation that is even faintly comparable with the

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amount of service which the holders of such a sum are empowered to demand of the world in the form of labour and the innumerable products of labour.

A financial "operator," who coined the phrase, "frenzied finance," has testified in a Boston court that he and his partners "made" forty-six million dollars by promoting a certain "trust." Fancy, if possible, the vast total of services by all sorts of men to which that staggering sum gave legal claim! From such enormities public indignation, class hatred, and social danger inevitably spring.

The street-railways of New York City have been capitalized, according to Judge Gaynor, at a figure over four times the value of their reality. On the hundreds of millions of "water" thus injected into their stock dividends of 6 per cent. are wanted—*i.e.*, 24 per cent. on the real investment. To pay these to the exploiters of the public service, for which they have been given the use of the city streets, every cash-girl, every labouring man who must travel to daily work, is taxed in an excessive car-fare a quarter of a dollar every week, or \$13 a year, over and above the legitimate return for the car-service. The records of the Charity Organization Society show this often and pathetically. Is it strange that a political adventurer with the cry of "municipal ownership" was able in 1905 to all but capture the mayoralty of New York? <sup>1</sup>

It may well be doubted whether the reddest Socialist

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed narrative of the scandalous 'manipulations which in 1907 bankrupted the Metropolitan Street Railway Company, see various American publications, especially *McClure's Magazine* for November and December, 1907, and January, 1908.



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has done so much to undermine respect for property rights as the Napoleons of finance, who lay society under contribution to create fortunes that lack the solid basis of proportionate services rendered to the community—even advancing the price of oil 20 per cent. in 1902, a time of fuel-famine due to the coal-miners' strike, after dividing profits for the year of 45 per cent.

James Russell Lowell remarked that there is dynamite enough in the New Testament to shatter our social system, if not carefully handled. Clear enough, while 1 per cent. of the families of the Republic possesses more wealth than the remaining 99 per cent. Jesus' saying, "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve," is true of every son of man. "He that is great among you shall be your servant" is a fundamental law of the Republic of God. Essential to social stability as well as to personal integrity is an ethical valuation of money, as the measure of service in equal reciprocity between man and man.

This requires the service given to be balanced by a sum of money good for an equivalent amount of service received, and no more. The rule is incontestable. The principle of a just balance between service given and service received, so flagrantly repudiated by some who are said to "think in millions," continues to be appealed to in a small way by people who dispute what they deem exorbitant bills for services rendered. It is constantly affirmed in the courts where such disputes are adjudicated. Money is held to be what it was designed to be—the measure of actual service, and the legal claim for it is limited

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to the amount of the service it requites. In this the ethical standard of the law is in advance of the ethics of the business world, which is prone to look at "what the market will bear" in the line of extortion, rather than at the actual value of the service rendered, as the measure of demand. This is precisely what the Bible brands as "covetousness," along with vices which modern society punishes as crimes. We think scorn of nations that tolerate sexual immorality. But how little are those who tolerate the financial immorality from which vast misery springs entitled to boast themselves in comparison! Indeed, the enormous infractions of ethical principle committed by autocrats of the market in exacting a tribute from the community exceeding any imposed by ancient conquerors on subject provinces are, in their way, as demoralizing to the public conscience of right and wrong as the most lascivious theatrical shows could be. These the law suppresses, but in the absence of adequate legal check upon those it is time that the churches and their teachers were awake to the moral crisis that threatens the stability of the Commonwealth, while it tests the moral quality of current religion.

Such, then, is the ethical significance of money, as the intended medium and measure of that fair exchange of service with service which makes society a mutual-benefit association. It cannot be insisted on too strenuously as vital to the stability of the Republic. Neglect of it tends to make society an arena of mutual spoliation, in which democracy and religion perish together.

## The Ethical Significance of Money

In applying any principle whatever we encounter problems, and so in the present case. Of these it now remains to speak.

As an order for service passes from hand to hand in the form of money, the ethical significance of the transaction rests upon the principle of justice as expressed in the ancient Roman formula, "*To each his own*"; no more, no less. Here, then, is the crucial problem. What may he who renders a service justly demand for it as *his own*? Is there any criterion of the amount of service in return—as expressed in money value—that is justly *his*? There are but two supposable criterions. One is the *benefit* value to the receiver of the service given; the other is the *cost* value to the giver of it. Which of these is required, and which forbidden, by the social spirit of justice, intent always on gluing man to man in equity and good will? What may the giver of service demand as justly *his*?

The service rendered has saved life or limb. Shall its just compensation be measured by the value of life or limb? It has saved an estate, it has vindicated a good name, by bringing the spoiler or the slanderer to justice. Is the *benefit* value of such service to its receiver the true criterion of the compensation due? To affirm this is simply to charter extortion, limited only by the resources of its victims, like the recently reported charge by a New York surgeon of seven thousand dollars for operating on a common case of appendicitis, or the bill of four figures said to have been presented to a foreign prince by an American dentist for two or three hours of service.

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It is true that this principle is recognized in law. The salvors of an endangered vessel and its cargo are legally entitled to proportion their claim to the value of the property rescued. Accordingly, the Pacific Commercial Cable Company filed a claim in September, 1906, of \$300,000 for hauling off the liner *Manchuria* from the reef near Honolulu, thereby saving a property valued at \$2,500,000. Yet the same logic would justify a physician in making a proportionately larger demand for saving the life of a capitalist, on whom great financial interests were depending, than for the same service to his bookkeeper. But the law is based on a false principle. I do not forget that I am a lay critic of the law, but a learned judge in a neighbouring State publicly endorsed my criticism when made in his presence. The claim to profit proportionately to the peril or distress which service may relieve is an inhuman claim, commending itself only to coiners of cash out of human woe, like the cartmen who demanded a dollar a minute for salvage service while Baltimore was burning. The only criterion compatible with the social spirit of unsophisticated humanity is the cost value of the service to its giver. This only is what he may require as justly his own.

This statement is a necessary corollary of the fundamental social law of religion, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and it is as indisputable as that. The only plausible ground for a demurrer to it is that it is practically unworkable. It certainly coheres ill with common thought and practice. But, said Lowell :

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In vain we call old notions fudge,  
And bend our conscience to our dealing:  
The Ten Commandments will not budge,  
And stealing will be always stealing.

The difficulty is not with the working, but with the *will* to work, and to find a way to work. Whether in mechanics or in ethics, a sound principle prescribes but one condition of efficiency—a loyal will to work with it. For this it can afford to wait till the recalcitrant yields, as finally he must. I repeat, then, that the only ethical criterion of the just compensation for service rendered is the *cost* value to the giver of service.<sup>1</sup>

In so saying it is not forgotten that service-givers differ in efficiency. One will spend two days in doing what another will do in one. The cost of inefficiency is not to be added to the cost of service. Neither is the law of supply and demand to be set aside, but rather to be morally used. A product of labour which nobody wants, whatever it costs to produce it, is of no value, simply because it is of no *service*. We may still buy cheap in the tropics, and sell dear in the far North. But to buy cheap and sell dear without regard to the causes of cheapness and dearness is immoral. The remark of a recent writer is indisputably true: "A price for necessary commodities or services, which does not secure the economic rights of the producer to wholesome conditions of life, is essentially immoral."

<sup>1</sup> President Roosevelt's idea of ascertaining the physical value of railroad property, often alleged to be over-capitalized, as a basis for estimating the reasonableness of railroad rates, is a significant recognition of the principle that the cost, not the benefit, of service is the just criterion of proper compensation for service.

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But one cannot here discuss the multitudinous particular applications of the general principle which none who accepts the authority of the Supreme Moral Teacher of the world can consistently deny. As in the case of his Golden Rule, loyalty to the principle must be trusted for its practical working out. It may be said here in passing, that a large class of cases lie outside of it under the general name of "fancy goods," as when \$1,500 is asked and given for a rare old postage-stamp. In this region of fictitious values, created and inflated by mutual desire, the law of the cost value of service does not hold.

One caution, however, is to be borne in mind: the cost value of service must be as comprehensively reckoned for the weaker as for the stronger givers of service. That it is not yet so an unimpeachable economic authority has observed. Says President Carroll D. Wright: "Capital charges to the consumer the depreciation of property and machinery. Why should not the depreciation of human machinery, its hands, its brain, its body, be included in the final cost?" The list is suggestively incomplete. Should not the labourer's cost of service include also provision for a sanitary home, and for the exemption of his children from being prematurely taken out of school to earn their bread? How inordinately, in contrast with the scrimping of the weaker part of the community, the cost of service has been figured for the profit of the stronger, has recently been glaringly revealed upon the witness-stand in a famous legislative investigation of certain life-insurance companies. It even poses as "reform," when the President of a



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company organized for the benefit of widows and orphans accepts a salary *reduced* to a sum eight times larger than the salary of the Governor of the Bank of England. The salary of the President of the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company, in Newark, New Jersey, one of the three American companies making the largest returns to policy-holders, is \$25,000. Right across the street is the Prudential, whose business is selling life insurance to the poor, for his services in which its President, devoting part of his time to the paid functions of a United States Senator, takes \$65,000. A few years ago the press gave wide notice to the fact that for two years' service as executor of the Pullman estate Robert T. Lincoln received \$412,000, a larger sum, it was stated, than his father had received during his entire life, including his compensation while President of the Nation.

But men greatly vary in ability, and ability enhances the value of service to the receiver. Does it not deserve proportionate return to the giver? In a *moral* estimate this depends on what it has *cost* the giver. So far as his ability is the product of laborious and expensive preparation and culture, it has cost him something, and has justly earned a proportionate return. But so far as it is a gift of nature, it has cost him nothing. Then it can hardly be thought to have earned a money claim to service, unless natural inequalities were designed to create or perpetuate artificial inequalities. Despotism derives its claim to service from having been born in the purple. Democracy cannot. It seems morally preposterous to think of divine endowments as given for private

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emolument, or for any other purpose than social benefit, and so enabling their possessor to gain the social rewards which make his fellows no poorer to give. The greater the service, the greater the due reward. But the highest rewards are not, except by the sordid, counted in cash. Napoleon's famous sneer at England as "a nation of shopkeepers" carried this much of moral truth—that the social rewards for which the soldier risks limb and life are a nobler prize than money, and the pursuit of them nobler than the pursuit of money. Social esteem and honour outshine and outlast all other wealth. In a more humanized period than the present, when man's wit, if not, as once, his weapons, is sharpened against his neighbours, and when men shall no more be divided into the eaters and the eaten, these will be the only recognized prize for competition. Already is this presaged by the physician discovering some new preservative of life, who prefers the honour of giving it to the world to the profit of a royalty upon its use. Medical ethics strenuously forbids any other course. The opposite principle is illustrated by the patent-medicine makers who oppose pure-drug legislation. In comparison with the social honours won by a Lister or a Pasteur, how ignoble a reward is mere cash !

Dr. Lyman Abbott has recently said : "A man may be a successful leader of industry who measures his success by the pecuniary reward it gives him, but no man can be a successful soldier, or statesman, or teacher, or preacher, who adopts any such standard" ; nor, I may add, will history inscribe any such man's name upon its roll of honour.



## The Ethical Significance of Money

An eminent writer in *The North American Review* said, last June: "Excessive gains, like excessive salaries, are inherently dishonest, and the men who seek them cannot possibly be of any genuine value to the American people. . . . Whoever has a dollar for which a dollar's worth in property or service has not been given, has a dishonest dollar; and, if he keeps it, he is a dishonest man, no matter by what fine phrases he seeks to cover such dishonesty."

One of our prisons is said to display to its inmates this inscription conspicuously placed: "The worst day in the life of a young man is the day he gets the idea that he can make a dollar without doing a dollar's worth of work for it." Better taught late than never; but why not early, in the school, the home, and the church?

All reputable economists agree that the present problem of their science is a more equitable distribution of wealth, that is, of the material basis of health, opportunity, and welfare. In other words, our present economic system is such that a few secure orders in the form of money for much more service than they have given, while many can only secure considerably less. Ten million people in this wealthy country are reported as having an income insufficient to maintain merely physical efficiency for work. In the nature of things any system so prolific of injustice is doomed to downfall, and all who would perpetuate it are doomed to share its downfall. But our present concern is to strike at the tap-root of its injustice—an immoral estimate of money as merely a means for commanding service, rather than as the measure

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for a just exchange of service. The capitalist scores the workman for caring more for the quantity of wage than for the quality of the work he gives for it. But he himself, in many instances, cares more for his dividends than for the service alleged to earn them. Both are tarred with the same brush. The difference in the practical result of their immoral idea of money is the difference between grand and petty larceny.

Here, then, is fallow ground for moral and religious teachers to break up, and to sow with some elementary moral truths. Not more do the arid lands of the far West need irrigation than the torpid moral sense of a money-hunting community needs to be sensitized to a moral estimate and use of money as the measure of services given and received in just exchange. Society is based on this just exchange in equal reciprocity. He who attempts, by the acquisition of money, to command more service from his fellows than he renders them, is unconsciously working for the disruption of the social bond, and the ruin of the Commonwealth.

## A Parable for a Time of Change



## VIII

### A PARABLE FOR A TIME OF CHANGE <sup>1</sup>

*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, etc.*

MATTHEW XXV. 1-13.

THIS parable has a close application to the modern Church that needs to be better understood. Indeed, one may say that it has hardly begun to be understood. It is usually taken, as a familiar hymn takes it, to apply to the individual soul.

Behold, the bridegroom cometh in the middle of the night,  
And well for him whose loins are girt, whose lamp is burning bright.

That is, the death-angel comes to each unexpectedly ; let each be ready for the call. This is sound doctrine, but it is not taught in this parable. That the parable speaks to the Church as a body is a fact on the face of it. It gives the story of an association of girls banded for a purpose, a company gathered for a wedding march and celebration. That, as we shall see, precisely fits the primitive Church, which during the first century was looking for the immediate coming of Christ to set up in triumph his kingdom in the world. According to the parable, there was a delay. The bridegroom did not come as soon as the company

<sup>1</sup> From *The Homiletic Review*, May, 1908.

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expected. Meanwhile they all fell asleep. When the call came, some were not ready to join in the procession ; they lost their share in the rejoicings that the others were ready for. These are the salient and instructive features of the story—a company with common expectations, a time of waiting in drowsy unconsciousness of what was coming on, a sudden crisis supervening, which only a part were ready to respond to, while a part had to fall out of the ranks, disappointed. All this finds a close parallel in the history of the Church. Unmistakably is the parable addressed to the Church as a body, the Church of that time, and equally the Church of our time ; particularly to the Church at any such time of transition and change as that time was, and as our time is.

The great mistake made in the first century, and made in the present century, is to suppose that the parable enjoins readiness for a winding up and end of things. The primitive Church thought of the end of the world as near, and that they must be ready for it. The modern Church thinks not so ; but thinks of individual life as liable to end at any moment, and that each must be prepared. True as this is, it is not the truth Jesus teaches here. What he wanted his Church to be prepared for was not a closing up, either of the world's history or of individual life. It was, on the contrary, an opening out into an advancing career of power and of joy, for the Church, and so for its individual members, in new triumphs of the heavenly Leader.

Just this is what we shall see in the history of the primitive Church. We find there an experience which

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so closely corresponds to the prophetic description in the parable that it leaves no room to doubt what the parable means. The key that fits the lock is this history. There is no better commentary on the teaching of Jesus than the experience of his disciples

This, as given in the Acts and in the Epistles of Paul, shows two distinct groups in the Church, Jewish and Gentile. Jewish Christians preferred to hold on to the ritual of Judaism; Gentile Christians thought this burdensome, and under Paul's teaching let it go, deeming brotherly love and a pure life in imitation of Christ enough. At first these two groups were not so sharply parted as later. The infant Church was unconscious of the crisis that was to come; its unity was still unbroken; the wise and the foolish "all slumbered and slept," till the ripe hour came with its call for an advance.

It was some fifteen years after Jesus that the crisis appeared. A council was called to consider it. Was Christianity to become a world-religion? Then it must give up the ancient sacrament of circumcision, and other peculiar ordinances of Judaism. But how stubbornly this was opposed Paul found to his cost. The Acts and his Epistles tell what he suffered as the leader of the Gentile section of the Church, its emancipator from the yoke and fetter of the Mosaic ritual.

Pass over a century now. See how things turned out. The Jewish-Christian group is found dwindling, and presently is lost to view. The Gentile-Christian group is found including nearly all who bear the Christian name, established in the populous centres of

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the Roman world, and well organized for its victorious career. Evidently, this is a history of the wise and the foolish among Christ's disciples—the wise who made, the foolish who refused to make, the great renunciation of some venerable and ancient rites in order to make the religion of Christ a religion for mankind. Here seems to be a clear and close correspondence between the salient features of the parable and the salient facts of history. The key fits the lock. Jesus was surely aware of the revolutionary tendencies of his teaching. And if he had intended to forewarn of the crisis that in time would come, with a call to follow where his teachings led, he could hardly have made a parable that would prove truer to experience than this. Nowhere does the prophetic foresight of Jesus receive a finer illustration than in this parable as interpreted by history.

Were this only ancient history, it need not detain us. It is modern history also, and we need to pursue it further. But, especially for the present practical lesson, the question must be answered here, What is meant in the parable by the oil which the wise had, but the foolish lacked? What was the one thing needful, the having or not having of which made all the difference between the wise and the foolish—between failure and success?

Only moderate acquaintance with the Bible is enough to show that oil is a frequent symbol of the divine Spirit, as the source of light, insight, wisdom. Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed, to signify the Spirit's gift of light and leading. So Jesus himself was named the Christ, *i.e.*, the Anointed One,



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spiritually gifted. And the spirit of the Christ was manifestly a sacrificial spirit, freely devoting its best to its great hope and endeavour, the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, the divine order upon earth. The facts show that just this sacrificial spirit was the oil which the wise and ready had, the foolish and unready had not, when the crisis came with its call to advance.

Refer again to the history. The crisis that Paul faced was to settle whether the religion of Jesus should break away from the limitations of Leviticus, and sacrifice whatever Jewish ordinances hindered it from being adopted by all mankind. The crucial question for every Jewish evangelist was this: Was he ready to surrender much of his Judaism that he was attached to, for the sake of making Christian disciples among the Gentiles? We easily underestimate the struggle that it must have cost a patriotic Jew like Paul, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," to part with much that the past had hallowed, to say even of the great sacrament of his hereditary faith, "Circumcision is nothing," that he might win the Greeks to Christ. But this great surrender of the partial to the universal interest was the proof of his wisdom. Only so could he and his Jewish helpers have become the fathers of churches that overspread the Roman world. And it was just because his Judaizing opposers could not surrender their precious ritual to the exigencies of the crisis, that their churches fell into decline and withered up. Thus it was as in the parable: "The foolish took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps"—the oil of the sacrificial spirit,

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the spirit of the Cross, without which there may be much religiosity, but little religion.

It is the way of history to repeat itself. The experience of the Church in Paul's time reappeared in the Church of Luther's time, with the same contrast of wise and foolish, the ready and the unready to respond with a sacrifice to the call for an advance. In the sixteenth century, as in the first, these two groups appear in the Catholic Church, all unconscious of the nearing crisis. Each group desired reform of intolerable abuses. But the root of evils was in the Papacy itself, with its claim to lordship over the conscience. To break with it was necessary for any radical reform. But to break with the Pope was to cut oneself off from the venerable organization outside of which most men then believed there was no salvation from hell-fire. To become a Protestant, a come-outer, was to become excommunicated from the Church of one's parents and ancestors, to defy the censure of the Christian world. In coming out from Romanism, Luther faced conditions essentially the same as Paul faced in coming out of Judaism. He met them with a sacrifice as great. How great the sacrifice of each, we who inherit its fruits quite poorly appreciate. Only those who had the oil in their lamps could have made it. As for those who lacked the oil for the great emergency—the spirit of sacrifice that alone can light the path of progress—history tells of these foolish ones, as of the wise. The issue on which they parted was fraught with a sequel which runs through the after-history of the Protestant nations on one side, and the Roman Catholic on the other.

## A Parable for a Time of Change

Pass over the glaring contrast between these national groups, the progressive and the laggard nations, and contrast their Churches in their influence on the life of the people. What do we find in any Protestant country as compared with any country where Romanism has had the field to itself? Compare England with Spain, the United States with any Spanish-American republic. In which does the Church count much, in which little, for education, general intelligence, the popular standard of morality? Said the rector of the University of Salamanca in 1904: "In Spain to-day the majority of the people are illiterate, or little more, and the education given by the majority of the religious orders is generally detestable." Thus we see in fact what the parable shows in foresight; the open door for the wise, who have oil in store for the call to move onward, the shut door for the foolish, who have no oil.

Other such contrasts, though on a smaller scale, might be traced. One of these may be briefly mentioned. It appears in the history of the Church of England. In the seventeenth century she drove out the Puritans, in the eighteenth century she drove out the Methodists. To-day she retains less than half the population of England; her branch in our own country includes barely one per cent. of our people, and the twenty-five million Methodists dispersed through the world are permanently lost to her communion. How different it might have been! What if, at the critical moments now noteworthy in the past, as in the time of James I., in the time of Charles II., in the time of William and Mary, in the time of Wesley,

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she had exercised the sacrificial, instead of the persecuting spirit, ready with the oil of sacrifice, preventing schism with charity, conciliation, concession, how enlarged her influence in the world might have been to-day! On the other hand, the early history of Puritanism and of Methodism is a history of wise sacrifice, but its sequel is a story of power and progress, both in Church and State.

We may well believe that a parable thus repeatedly illustrated in Church history is destined to further illustration. There is reason to think further illustration is not far away. The history which gives us the key to the parable has shown us that, while the old is ripening for change into the new, men are unconscious of what is coming. New thoughts are striking root in many minds, new opinions are gaining headway, repugnance to existing conditions and yearnings for better are deepening; but the movement is underground. As in the parable, all slumber till some unexpected event sounds the call that wakes all sleepers to some sort of action: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh"; go forth to meet the bringer-in of the new order.

The attentive student of the world's passing show can hardly resist the conviction that we have been moving through just such a period of unconscious waiting for some momentous change, for which it deeply concerns the Church to be ready with oil in her lamps. During the nineteenth century, science and machinery wrought in industrial, social, and intellectual conditions a change that was simply revo-

## A Parable for a Time of Change

lutionary. But it cannot be said that the Church has adapted herself to any commensurate change to meet the new demands. There are signs that she has lost influence with the toiling machine-workers on one hand, and the highly educated on the other. The one class does not find in the Church the sympathy and brotherhood found in the union or the lodge. The other class finds the Church indifferent or hostile to the conclusions which science constrains them to hold. And so it has become to-day a seriously debated question whether the Church is to retain or to lose her ancient leadership for the brawn and brain of the world.

For the Church that is awake to such facts the question is simply one of readiness to cope with them—a question of oil in the lamp, or no oil, the sacrificial spirit of Christ, which alone can cope with the facts, and satisfy their demands.

If, now, the Church is to serve at God's altar of human need so effectively as to win men to him and to his Christ, then the brotherhood of men in the full religious equality of rich and poor, educated and ignorant, before their Father, God, must be shown by the Church as clearly as Jesus showed it, putting aside all the differences of culture, or wealth, or race. But to meet the hunger of the multitudes for the human sympathy they have not yet discovered in the Church may require some levelling of social barriers between class and class, some riddance of racial antipathies, probably also no small devotement of great possessions to enlarge the opportunities and uplift the life of the lowly.

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So, also, if the intellectual need of the twentieth century is to be met by statements of religious truths in agreement with the statements of modern learning, then some theological formulas that squared well with ancient learning will have to be reverently laid aside in the museum of things once useful, but useful no more.

As in the time of Paul and in the time of Luther, so now, the air, long vibrating with the note of change, is resonant with the call of a critical moment to the slumbering Church, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." Those who doubt it, who do not hear it, are simply asleep. The need of to-day is to heed the lesson writ so large in the history of the Church as commentary on this parable, for every time of change when the old order is beginning to blossom into the new. The open door of fellowship with the divine Leader of the world's advance, in his victory over all that divides, defiles, degrades humanity, awaits the Church that is ready to respond to his call with lamps alight and full of oil, wise in the sacrificial spirit to renounce whatever cuts the nerve of human brotherhood with private interests, or with class distinctions, or with racial prejudices, and to abandon all that burdens Jesus' sole requirement of a loving and a righteous life with the extra demands of creed-makers.

But this lesson for the Church as a body necessarily carries a lesson to its members one by one. Each has part in the duty of the whole. Opportunity comes with the same question both to the society and to the individual. What can *you* do to promote the divine order of the world, the Kingdom of Heaven?

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And the Cross of Christ points to the same answer as this parable : that our furtherance of the Kingdom is measured by our effort, our sacrifice, to remove the hindrances in its way. What is there, then, each earnest-minded one will ask himself, in my conduct, my business, my use of money, my bearing toward neighbours or rivals, my behaviour toward servants or dependents, my temper and spirit as a man with fellow men, that tends to discredit the fundamental law of the Kingdom, the brotherhood of man with man that roots in the Fatherhood of God ? To cast any such stumbling-block out of his neighbour's way is as effective a thing as anyone can singly do for the fulfilment of the great hope, "Thy Kingdom come." Let no one underrate what he can do for this, or undervalue the power of a good example. One unselfish action inspires many. One brave man emboldens a hundred cowards. Nothing is more contagious than spirit ; nothing more potent than the spirit of sacrifice for our fellows.

Readiness for this is the oil in the lamp of the wise, the sign of their wisdom, their passport to the open door of triumph and of joy.





# Religious Unity Morally Expressed



## IX

### RELIGIOUS UNITY MORALLY EXPRESSED<sup>1</sup>

AN astute and unscrupulous politician remarked some time ago that the church vote was negligible, but the saloon vote was not, as it could be depended on to "go solid." It can hardly be doubted that religious men generally fail to use the power which a representative democracy gives them, to secure by their use of the ballot the moral interests of religion, now threatened and invaded at many points. There is no doubt that the forces that might make for righteousness in social and civic life are less unified than their antagonists, and so are often worsted. The military maxim, "Divide and conquer," is based on the experience of the divided. Such experience has made religious unity one of the burning questions of our time.

The supreme problem before religious men is the furtherance and triumph of the moral government of God in the world. This being a moral problem, the achievement of the religious unity necessary to effect it is also a moral problem, whose solution must consequently be expressed in moral terms. On the threshold

<sup>1</sup> From *The Homiletic Review*, December, 1905.

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of this proposition two unquestionable facts demand clearer recognition by religious men, and, primarily, by Christian men.

The first fact is, that the very differences upon which Christian men have divided, more seriously indeed in the past than in the present happier time of mutual approach, have really drawn their strength from the single and supreme interest in which all were and are agreed. Let any who doubt it look around the whole circle of sects in whose centre stands the Cross. Underneath all zeal for denominational specialities what is the one thing that every truly Christian man, however drawn apart from other Christians, is most deeply concerned for? Is it not that he may do the will of God, and get it done by others, in a pure and benevolent life? Superficially viewed, he seems to be chiefly concerned for a creed, a sacrament, a polity; but in a deeper view it is for these only as means to his main end that he cares, as aids in his main struggle for the supreme moral interest, that God's will may be done on earth. It is for this that Christians holding to the doctrine of an endless hell have separated from Christians believing in ultimately universal salvation, through fear that the sanctions of the moral law were weakened by this belief. For this, again, the Trinitarian Christian, affirming the metaphysical oneness of Christ with God, stands aloof from the Unitarian Christian who writes such hymns as

In the Cross of Christ I glory,  
but affirms only an ethical unity; he fears that this limitation imperils the supreme moral interest of

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redemption from sin. For this, again, Christians who deny that any errors can be found in the Bible have excluded from fellowship Christians who affirm that there are such, lest tolerance of such an affirmation contribute to invalidate the moral authority of the words of eternal life. The same moral interest underlies the high churchman's unchurching of all Christians not presided over by bishops episcopally ordained, because, as he thinks, only through a certain series of consecrating hands in unbroken succession from Christ's apostles can flow the spiritual grace from the divine Head of the Church that is essential to its moral obedience, guidance, and victory.

With this indubitable fact in view, this unity in the supreme moral interest of religion underlying all the controversy and disunity that appear on the surface, the cause of schisms is plain. At one as to the end, we have been at odds as to the ways and means. The many specialized forms of our common Christianity are so many variations of the common effort to promote the common end—the keeping of God's commandments, the seeking of his Kingdom as followers of his Son. This being the real inwardness of the situation, this moral unity of a common purpose being implicit in all the diverse creeds and rites and polities by which Christians too often have been unhappily estranged, the prime desideratum for a closer drawing together of Christian hearts and forces is simply to recognize the real fact, to lay it to heart, to insist upon it for all it is worth. This is precisely the thing that has failed to be done. We have too seldom looked below the broken surface

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to the point whence all lines of special interest diverge. By all means let us follow our own way of thought and action for sacred interests, so far as convinced that it is *for us* the best way of helping in the work of the Kingdom of God. In so doing we admit not only the right but the duty of our brother to do the same, although it may lead him on a very different road from our own. But let us never fail amid all differences to hold fast the reconciling and unifying conviction, that the Christian brother who adopts what we reject and rejects what we adopt is nevertheless pursuing in his way the same central purpose as we in our way.

Evidently, this is the true approach to the problem of Christian unity, so far as the subject presents a problem. Even on the broken surface of thought, were one to regard it thoughtfully, one would see that our agreements far preponderate over our disagreements, if one is disposed to weigh them instead of counting them ; while at bottom all disagreements merge in that unity of desire and purpose which we all confess in the common prayer that Jesus gave us for its expression. The problem of the divided Church is just this—a better realization of the essential unity which it already possesses and implicitly confesses. Now, of course, when the inward comes outward, and the implicit is made explicit, it must be in some visible embodiment. And so in hope of a resurrection of our Christian unity of purpose from beneath the overlying mass of competing Christian forms, the question springs to the front, “ With what body doth it come ? ”

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Here a second fact stakes the line in which the answer must be found. *The form in which anything is to be expressed is determined by the nature of the thing requiring expression.* The length of a musical note is expressed by a measure of time, the length of a ribbon by a measure of space; the weight of a mountain in an estimate of tons, the weight of an argument in an estimate of reasons; the sharpness of an axe by cut wood, the sharpness of a tongue by cut feelings. Now the Christian unity that needs expression is the unity that the Lord's Prayer expresses, a unity in love to God, and loyalty to God, and purpose to do the Will and seek the Kingdom of God—that is, it is a *moral* unity; not an intellectual, or governmental, or ritual unity. Trying to express it by the celebration of a rite, or the government of a church, or the definition of a doctrine, is like trying to express depth of sound by depth of colour. So then, just as a musical fact must be expressed in musical terms, a material fact in material terms, a mathematical fact in mathematical terms, *a moral fact must be expressed in moral terms.* Such a fact is the Christian unity of moral interest and purpose which we see existing. It is the only unity that Jesus recognized, or provided for, or thought of. In saying, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," he commended it to us with all possible emphasis. It is the only unity that is compatible with the vast diversity of minds and temperaments. According to the natural and universal law of expression, above formulated, there is only one way to express it. This

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is in the *moral terms* of a common affection, aspiration, and endeavour for the common end all have at heart. Compared with this, the proposition for unity that has been most widely and seriously discussed—the Chicago-Lambeth “Quadrilateral”—has evidently followed a blind trail. A moral unity cannot express itself in the historical and metaphysical statements of the Nicene Creed (which the present writer accepts as he interprets it), or in the “historic episcopate”; simply because these, however helpful one may find them for his moral interest, are not of a nature essentially moral. These forms we know have been accepted by many whose aims were far from moral harmony with Christ’s aims.

In a world where nature with her myriad varieties of living forms proclaims that uniformity of vital development is unnatural, we have been slow to see that uniformity of creed, or rite, or organization, is not the natural expression of Christian life in the divine unity of the spirit. We have been too prone to think of brethren who do not theologize or ordain in our way as half-brothers, or brothers illegitimate. It is high time to come to Jesus’ mind, regarding Christian unity as moral unity with him and each other in trying to get God’s Will done on earth. Let the fact be grasped, that to express and to foster this unity he gave us not a creed, but a prayer. Men will always theologize differently, and organize differently, but they must needs pray in unison, if they pray at all. For all true prayer sums itself up in one aspiration, “Thy Will be done.”

Christian unity, therefore, can find its natural



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embodiment only in the activities of fraternal co-operation to enthrone the divine righteousness in human society. It can come only as we come back to Christ's thought of his Church as a brotherhood purposing to make his principles supreme in the life of men. This, however, need not interfere with our interest in our separate ways, whether of speculation or of administration. Our national progress is better provided for by forty-six States independently working out social problems, while facing the world as a national unit. So our variously named Churches are more likely to learn of one another while cultivating each its speciality. But while the truth between opposing views can be reached only by uncompromising discussion, and while we are bound to be each as zealous for his own way as his sense of its value requires, each must remember that "the sanctities of life are not in our separations, but in our communications." Against excess of emphasis on any religious speciality the imperative safeguard is insistence on Christian character as the ultimate test of either theory or practice. The real worth of whatever is held to in the name of religion is its moral worth in promoting the conformity of the human will to the divine in truth, and righteousness, and brotherly love. Impressively is this sometimes attested at the grave's mouth, where the righteous is acknowledged in his death as a brother-in-God by those who in his life disowned him as such. Witness the prayers for the soul of Frances Willard, offered in the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Minneapolis, a testimony to the ineradicable human conviction that the righteous

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soul, though declared by the creed an impenitent heretic, is still one with all the faithful in Christ.

Pleas for Christian unity have been urged with lament that there are about a hundred and fifty sects in our country. But why should that number be lamentable? The student of botany or zoology learns from nature that the exuberance of her forms expresses simply the exuberance of the one life that animates all. We do not regard the fact that there are nearly five hundred varieties of the humming-bird a discredit to the Creator's wisdom. So should we regard the diversities of form in which religious life expresses itself. Their multiplicity is no evil, but it has been perverted to evil, because religious men have mistakenly emphasized the outward instead of the inward, have regarded the livery more than the life, have cared more for a corporation of saints than for the communion of saints. But to-day the largest Church corporation on earth, hoping ultimately to absorb all others, is even more afflicted with discord between the monastic orders within its shell of external unity than our own Protestantism, externally divided though it be. The only natural and only possible embodiment of the unity of spirit which we confess in the Lord's Prayer is not a corporation, but co-operation. Against the league of Antichrist in which the forces of covetousness and corruption, of fraud and vice, face us formidably together, the need of the time is not a guerilla policy, not a division of Christian forces into separate forts, but combined effort in an active expression of their common purpose "to destroy the works of the devil."

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The army that followed the flag of the Union against the foes of the Union carried after it the various colours of corps and brigade. So let us be Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and all the rest, but only for the common purpose ; and rather than magnify our *isms* magnify the common family name of Christian.

Let it not be unobserved that the facts and principles here exhibited apply outside the pale of the Church as well as within. The Kingdom of God is not counterminous with the Church as now existing. The sympathetic reader can divine what might be said further, did present limits permit. Between all who can say from the heart so much as this : " I believe in God, the Father Almighty," there exists a massive agreement, whose intrinsic importance for God's supreme requirement, the righteous life, outweighs all disagreements in religious thought, whatever they be. " Religion," said Professor Pfeiderer, " is attachment to God with the will." The central aspiration of the religious spirit under whatever outward form is to link the human will with the divine. Wherever this aspiration exists, there the fundamental and eternal bond of unity with all kindred spirits exists. Existing, it demands its natural expression in oneness of religious activity with them, in combined endeavours to promote God's righteousness in the world. The riot of selfishness and moral anarchy that deranges and corrupts the industrial, commercial and municipal life of our people can be quelled only by massing against it all the religious interests that it threatens.

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Acting on this principle, Christians and Jews have now for years co-operated in the New York State Conference of Religion, in whose meetings is used a Book of Common Worship, compiled by a committee consisting of an Episcopalian, a Unitarian, and a Jew.

Finally, underneath all the nominal or formal divisions between men seeming or professing to be religious, there is one both deep and real. It is the vital difference that separated the Paulinists from the Judaizers in the Apostolic churches, the difference still felt between men of the spirit and men of the letter. In any line of things, religious or non-religious, unity of spirit dies under the stickling of men of the letter for form and formulary. These are they who have led the Church—originally, as that scholarly churchman, Professor Edwin Hatch, has said, a society for the amendment of life—off from Jesus' ground of unity in spiritual aspiration and moral endeavour, to seek it in forms of government and formularies of doctrine, where their successors still would detain it. The natural result has been Phariseeism within the Church and scepticism without ; on the one side division, on the other derision.

There are signs, however, that this wandering in the wilderness of delusion is nearing the way out. Zeal for the spiritual life that unites is outgrowing fondness for the sectarian liveries that divide. The frost is coming out of the ground. In the warm change of competitive into co-operative Churches Christianity will rediscover and prove its power for the healing of the nations.

## Jesus the Ideal Man



## X

### JESUS THE IDEAL MAN <sup>1</sup>

THIS proposition obviously raises two questions : (1) Does the record of the Evangelists represent Jesus as the ideal man ? (2) Was he really such ?

Dr. Martineau finds the Gospel portrait of Jesus somewhat blemished, but ascribes the blemishes to the fault of the delineators. He eliminates them by criticism, and obtains thereby a faultless portrait of an ideal character. It is easily conceivable that the subject of a biography may suffer in well-meaning but unskilful hands, and may be pronounced better than they represent him. Still more may he suffer when their work has been exposed for a long time to the chances of manuscript through several generations of copyists ; and he is entitled to the benefits of a judicious scrutiny of their work. Supposing that the result handed down to us presents a character not altogether faultless, criticism must inquire whose the fault is. To insist that we must stand by what is written is to join the politician who refuses to go behind the returns from the polls. Go behind them, however, one must ; and in fact there is none, even the most orthodox, who does not to some extent feel

<sup>1</sup> From *The New World*, June, 1897.

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the necessity of going behind them. Indeed, an example of this appears even in one of the Evangelists, Luke, whose idealizing tendency has been dwelt on by so conservative a critic as Dr. A. B. Bruce. Dr. Bruce points out instances, as in Luke's narrative of the Temple cleansing. "It seems," he says, "to be a half-told tale, as if adapted to the capacity of spiritual minors, who would find it difficult to reconcile the strenuous conduct of Jesus with their preconceived ideas of his character."<sup>1</sup> In Luke's pages "the holiness of Jesus is so zealously guarded that he appears not only without sin, but even free from all that bears the most remote resemblance to moral infirmity in temper, word, or action."<sup>2</sup> This statement of Luke's tendency will be accepted, even by those who do not accept this estimate of his result.

A noted case, where orthodox readers always qualify the record by a mitigating interpretation, is in Jesus' saying to his mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"—words the brusqueness of which has been a grievance to many a tender heart. One who takes the narrative as authentic history explains that the word "woman" is no more a term of disparagement here than at the Cross (John xix. 26); and, further, that "what have I to do with thee?" is simply a bit of clumsy literalness on the translators' part, the original being an idiomatic phrase, signifying "don't interfere." In Luke iv. 34 we find it at once explained and emphasized by the added word *ἐα*, "let

<sup>1</sup> "With Open Face," by A. B. Bruce, D.D., p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.



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alone" (R.V. *margin*). One may assume that Jesus' tone was gentle, but tones cannot be printed.

But, in any such going behind the returns to correct the faultiness of the record, the critic has to be on guard against his own subjectivity;—*e.g.*, Dr. Martineau thinks that Jesus' tenderly human sympathy with sinners could never have spoken in such terms of contempt as these: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine." The friend of publicans could not, he urges, have used words like "dogs" and "swine," which some of his hearers were too ready to apply to all outside the pale of Judaism. So this precept must have been inserted by a later hand and a lower spirit. But for this conclusion there is no objective ground whatever. It is as arbitrary to suppose an exclusive reference to Gentiles intended by "dogs" in this passage as it would be in Philippians iii. 2, or Revelation xxii. 15, and equally arbitrary to regard the use of the concrete term instead of the abstract "impure" as contemptuously intended.

Good criticism may indeed be spun, like the spider's web, out of wholly subjective material, but it must have anchorage in objective fact. An instance, in contrast with the foregoing, is the criticism brought against the account of Jesus at the Pharisee's table (Luke xi. 37 ff.). It is certainly in conflict with our ideal of courtesy for a guest to utter invectives against his host, as Jesus is here recorded to have done. But we find some objective ground for justifying the conclusion that he did not do what we feel that he could not have done. Portions of what Luke reports

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as table-talk Matthew reports as belonging to Jesus' final discourse in the crucifixion week against the Pharisees' party. The conclusion is sound that Luke has mixed things, and represents Jesus as saying at the hospitable table what he said elsewhere.

Thoughtful readers of the Gospels, if they regard Jesus as the ideal man, believe that duly considerate criticism satisfactorily removes any real or seeming blemishes in his portrait which are not fairly attributable to him. The instances above given are of this sort, answering to our first question, Does the record represent Jesus as the ideal man? Back of this is the second and larger question, Was he really such? In far the larger number of instances there is no ground for discriminating in the record between reality and report, and our judgment of Jesus' character must be determined by what is written. In the case of the Pharisee just mentioned, after criticism of the record has found good ground for holding that Jesus did not violate a scene of hospitality with a diatribe against his host, the fact remains that on another occasion he gave vent to the most scathing denunciations of his opponents, and it is alleged that the ideal man will never talk as Jesus talks in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew.

The fault-finder seems to make certain assumptions, viz., either these people were not as bad as Jesus represents, or, if they were, it can never be justifiable to paint men as black as they are; or, if relatively to them it may be justifiable, relatively to one's self it is not, for it cannot be done without roiling one's self with personal animosity. In brief, the fault-

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finder seems to understand the situation and the speaker better than does the speaker himself. One who would comprehend the feelings of Jesus in that terrible discourse must read in connection with it Luke's story of his weeping over the city a few days before. A mother denouncing the corrupter of her child is entitled to reverent and sympathetic judgment. "Serpents," "brood of vipers," is not scolding, but truthful description of sanctimonious scoundrels. The hour of teaching was past ; the hour of a dying testimony had come, an hour for indispensable warning to those who were to take up his work. The objector sees bitterness in it. That is matter of opinion. The very excellences of a man may seem defects to those who do not understand him. The general answer that may fairly be made to many criticisms, whether upon Jesus or other men, is, that they omit to reckon the parallax, as astronomical observers on opposite sides of the earth have to do. They forget that their angle of vision is not identical with another's. "Dogs" and "swine" appear to the critic as terms of contempt ; may not Jesus have used them simply as condemnatory, and still with pity ?

The criticism of Jesus' character as not of ideal perfection springs in our time, not from desire to reduce him to a lower level, but rather from higher perceptions of what an ideal character should be than those which once satisfied mankind. It may also be granted that the moral sensibility of some who allege moral blemishes in Jesus' character is more acute than that of some who regard the imputa-

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tion as blasphemous. We conceive that the imputation may be both honestly and reverently made in obedience to a rigorous demand for the highest ideal of moral excellence, and out of a desire to come at such an ideal through the study of Jesus' life as at least a near approach to it. Nevertheless, the imputation to Jesus of moral defect and weakness seems to have no better foundation than an imperfect apprehension of the facts.

But here we seek reconciliation with those in whom these words may raise a spirit of dissent. Many, either on philosophical or critical grounds, are intrenched in the conviction that Jesus was not an ideal man. Attempts to remove their objections by specific criticism of particulars they view as special pleading, and are impatient of it. Even with such we would find common ground, if possible, in a central rather than a peripheral view of Jesus, in his consciousness, if not in his conduct. The distinctive character of man, as contrasted with brutes, is in his consciousness. The specific character of any man is constituted by his consciousness. What he is, high or low, good or evil, is determined by the content of his consciousness. One who accepts the postulate of the essential oneness of the human nature and the divine must admit that whoso most thoroughly realizes this in his thought, and aspires to become in the activity of spirit and will what God in nature has given him to become, is the ideal man in that which is most central and vital to man. Now it would seem that this must be admitted of Jesus. Certainly he was unique in this respect. No one has so uttered the consciousness

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of a living unity with God, as sharing one life with God, God in him and he in God, in the unity both of nature and sympathy and will. Doubtless in this also, as in less central aspects of character, he was subject to the law of development. But it was none the less a development of that which is most fundamental in human nature. Let it be granted, for the moment, that in the periphery of conduct and contact with his environment his development was less than perfect, so that marks of incompleteness, even infirmities, appear. The ancient question returns, "What is man?" Estimate him centrally, not superficially; what is he in relation to the Eternal? That is the true measure of man. He is the ideal man in that true measure, who best conceives and realizes that relation. He heads the family, who best expresses its relation to the Father. Jesus, then, may be considered as the ideal man, because he has best represented the true idea of humanity as transcending the limits of the world and time, a filial life from God in time, but eternally in God, "the Son in the bosom of the Father." In this point of view his self-chosen appellation, "the Son of Man," is no misnomer. None has so realized the character of the human son of God. His consciousness of that filial character is the ideal consciousness. In virtue of that consciousness as regnant in his life, he must be deemed the ideal man in what is most profoundly vital to normal humanity.

But must the concession just made for a moment be finally yielded? Do defects appear in the round of Jesus' thought and conduct as contrasted with the central ideal of character? Holding the negative, one

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is challenged to meet a variety of specific objections with specific answers. The attempt to answer derives a certain presumption in its favour from what has been said of Jesus' ideal consciousness of man's relation to God. Right at the centre, was he wrong in the projection of such a spirit upon the world? In the detailed answer which objectors demand one may not only rest content that what is central and fundamental has been vindicated. One may also claim further common ground with them for just judgment upon the particulars that remain. They all see in Jesus much of human sympathy, sweet reasonableness, moral poise, and a spiritual repose in God far transcending what any of us have attained. This surely requires us to assign to him, rather than to ourselves, the benefit of the doubt in whatever is less than certain, and to deem it, in general, wiser to suspect our own judgment, as readers of remote and imperfectly related transactions, than his judgment as an actor in them.

Set in this light, a series of objections now demand examination.

Jesus has been accused of harshness to a poor suppliant, the Syrophœnician woman (Mark vii. 27). He is said to have termed her a dog. So it stands in our version; but in the Greek the harsh word, always denoting reprobation, is avoided for a gentler one, "doggies," such as were allowed in the house. It is not unlikely that Jesus' tone was even gentler than the word, and possibly not without a touch of friendly humour, since she catches at it and repeats it: "Yea, even the doggies under the table eat of the



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children's crumbs." If there is offence here, it must be to one who feels bound to lay a charge. It is neither unlikely nor unreasonable to assume that Jesus wished to prove her spirit, and why not as he did?

Fault has been found also with Jesus' alleged violation of property rights, as in the destruction of two thousand swine (Mark v. 13), the appropriation of the colt (Mark xi. 2-6), and the upsetting of the exchangers' money-tables (Mark xi. 15). As to the first case, whether one regards the narrative as historical or as legendary, the swine seem to have been used to complete the sufferer's cure. By seeing the malign influence to which he had been subject apparently buried in the depths of the lake, he would be convinced that it would no more return. We do not ask whose a thing is, when it becomes necessary to devote it in an emergency to the needs of human life. As to the second, the context answers the objection: leave to use the colt was granted. As to the third, the key to the situation is in the words, "den of robbers" (Mark xi. 17). For details of the extortion practised there Edersheim's "Life of Jesus" may be consulted (i. 370 ff.). Such enormities installed in the house of prayer by corrupt priests had no right to sufferance. Those whose rights to an unpolluted sanctuary were invaded had right to eject the invader by a summary process. Jesus fairly represented these. He constituted himself a vigilance committee of one. But he used a whip: this was violence; this was in contradiction of his own precepts of non-resistance. Was the whip, then, used as a weapon,

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or only as a symbol? Those extortioners deserved stripes according to Jewish law. Moreover, Jesus' precepts of non-resistance regard personal rather than public wrongs. The record shows no personal passion, but zeal for the common right of piety against invading scoundrelism. And the fact of the many retiring without resistance before the one shows that they were not beaten out but awed out. It was a case not of physical but of moral compulsion.

Again, it is charged that Jesus underrated family duty and affection. There is a seeming harshness in his denying a would-be disciple's request for permission to go first and bury his father. But what if the visit home would turn his mind from the purpose of discipleship, through the dissuasions of kindred representing the odium or the danger of following Jesus? Would it not be better to give up the visit rather than the discipleship? This is, of course, conjectural, but the record leaves us to conjecture, and reasonable conjecture is enough to vacate the objection rested on the non-statement of a reason. But Jesus' hard sayings about the necessity of "hating" one's nearest and dearest grate on many a reader. (See Matthew x. 37; Luke xiv. 25, 26.) As to this, it is plain from Matthew x. 40, and John xiv. 24, that Jesus demanded no personal preference for himself, but self-devotion to the demand of conscience for fidelity to one's convictions of truth and duty. But to resist the pleading of kindred, in order to "follow conscience down Niagara," seems to them like hating them. Doubtless Jesus had heard it so called, and so takes up the reproachful word, and declares that men must do



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for the right what may seem hateful to their dearest. The objector condemns Jesus for requiring the very conduct for which we honour the Christian martyrs.

But, it is said, we disapprove of him who courts martyrdom, and Jesus courted it. He gave himself up in the garden, when he could have avoided seizure, as he had previously done. He threw away his life by refusing to make a reasonable defence before the Roman governor. The objection virtually denies that a man may choose what seems to him the fittest time to lay down his life in a cause for which life may worthily be laid down. The world, then, has erred in praising Socrates, Decius, Quintus Curtius, and other self-immolating heroes. The only question, however, is whether the fit time to lay down life has been rightly chosen, and this is to be judged by the consequences of the action. The objector virtually contends that it would have been better for the world had Jesus not chosen to shorten his life as he did. We may be glad that Jesus thought differently.

In regard to other matters than family duties the social teachings of Jesus have been pronounced defective, viz., in his attitude to the rich, in a disregard of civic virtues, an encouragement of celibacy and of indiscriminate almsgiving, an impracticable theory of non-resistance, etc. The objector is as confident as Alphonso of Castile, who thought that, if he had been consulted before the world was created, he could have suggested some improvements to the Creator.

But, when Jesus declared that a rich man could no more enter the Kingdom of God than a camel could go through a needle's eye (Mark x. 25-28), he was

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stating it as a fact for that time, not as a fact for all times. It was in the crisis of his career, when it was rationally impossible to expect that men with much to lose should stake it on what they deemed a lost cause. But he goes on to refer to what is "possible with God," as if in faith that it will not always be so. The objector here commits the common fallacy of mistaking a particular proposition for a universal. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31) is also misunderstood, apparently because nothing is said of their respective characters. But the preceding context shows that the greedy rich were in Jesus' mind. As greedy, and not as rich, he portrays their retribution. The wealthy young ruler was of another sort. Of him we read that "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him" (Mark x. 21). Here one may call attention to the fact that the condensed and fragmentary nature of the record, often reduced to a meagre outline, gives special opportunity for cavils at things for which there is no explicit statement of reasons. It were to be wished that the opportunity also given for considerate and candid intelligence were oftener exercised by the critic.

The failure of Jesus to inculcate the civic virtues included in the idea of patriotism has been often alleged by those who, with Mr. J. S. Mill, eulogize, in contrast, the Greek and Roman philosophers. The objector fails to observe (1) the restriction imposed on subjects in a tyrannically governed province, as on an Armenian in Turkey; (2) the restriction self-imposed by prudence in view of the zealotry of Jewish patriots (see John vi. 15), ever liable to explode

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in insurrection if addressed in terms suggesting hope of a patriotic leader; (3) that Jesus took a course which, though indirect, was both the most radical and the most hopeful. He inculcated those seminal principles of a sound social order from which alone can civic virtues symmetrically unfold. His Great Commandment enjoins each to be for the other, and all for God. His Golden Rule admits competition only as rivalry in mutual benefaction. He taught that true greatness is greatness in social service. He required that scrupulous regard for the weakest individuals in which Greek and Roman philosophers were signally deficient. To the great question of social ethics, "Who is my neighbour?" his parable of the Good Samaritan gave an extension which the world still fails to adopt. He laid down the principles which men still look to as those of the ideal society of the future—help to each according to his need; service from each according to his ability. Thus, far from failing to teach true citizenship and civic virtue, he supplied its very soil and stimulus, at that time the thing most wanting, at every time the thing most necessary. Besides all this he did, as far as possible under Roman despotism, the very thing which Mr. Mill says he omitted. When he declared at the outset that he came "to fulfil the law and the prophets," he expressly adopted the ideals of civic righteousness exhibited by such men as Isaiah, and to-day inculcated in free countries by Christian preachers as his ideals.

But it is said that society could not hold together, civilization could not advance, in such neglect of

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worldly interests as Jesus recommends, and such yielding to injustice as he enjoins: "Resist not him that is evil" (Matthew v. 39); "Sell that ye have and give alms" (Luke xii. 33); "Lay not up treasures on the earth" (Matthew vi. 19). Whether this is "an idyllic view of the world," which common sense must reject, depends on what Jesus intended. Did he intend to lay down a social code, or only the rule of a propaganda? The latter is the more probable, in view of the fact that Christian missionaries, such as most of the early disciples were, have always observed these requirements. The waiving of personal rights for the sake of influence in their work has always been a main principle with them (1 Corinthians ix. 4-16). But the man who knows that each should be his brother's keeper cannot waive his brother's rights; the principle of non-resistance was not meant to apply to these. Witness Jesus himself driving out the profaners of the Temple. The historical interpretation in the example of the missionary Church, persecuted but unresisting, is the true one.

In this connection we find the criticism that Jesus enjoined and practised an unethical charity, whose indiscriminate almsgiving breeds pauperism (Matthew v. 42). As to what he did, one is not entitled to assume, in the absence of information, that he made no discrimination between the deserving and the undeserving poor. As to the limitation which modern charities set to Jesus' precept, may it not be said that the precept itself, occurring in an exposition of the duty of benevolence, carries its own implicit limitation to a giving which is really helpful, not

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demoralizing? Nor would it be expected that a wandering and persecuted teacher, in a ministry of the briefest extent, should inaugurate agencies of self-help for the indigent, instead of simply offering humane relief to immediate needs wherever presented.

But it is charged that Jesus approved of celibacy (Matthew xix. 10-12). Did he otherwise than as we do in certain cases, for the sake of a commanding interest? In a later time, enthusiastic ascetics undoubtedly pressed his saying beyond reason, as did Origen. St. Paul understood it more sanely, himself a celibate, but affirming his right to marry, and censuring the prohibition of marriage as a doctrine of "seducing spirits" (1 Corinthians ix. 5; 1 Timothy iv. 1-3).

So it is said that Jesus endorsed the old Hebrew idea of the sinfulness of taking interest on loans. The objection rests on a mistranslation. The Authorized Version of Luke vi. 35, "Lend, hoping for nothing again," has given place in the Revised Version to "Lend, never despairing" (*margin*, "despairing of no man"). The fact is that Jesus made no pronouncement on the point supposed.

The immediately foregoing objections to Jesus' teachings, as defective in a social point of view, lead on to another of larger scope. It is said that his view of the world was pessimistic. The world could not be bettered by gradual improvement, but must be swept away by catastrophe, and replaced by the miraculous introduction of a better world from heaven (Matthew xxiv.). For superficial readers, who do not

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discriminate, as the Revised Version would enable them to do, between the "end of the world" and the "consummation of the age," there is a colour of plausibility in this objection. There can be, however, little doubt that Jesus' prophecies of the "end" referred to the Jewish world, not to the terrestrial globe. His symbolic descriptions, in imagery derived from the poetic language of the Hebrew prophets, of the extinction of the great lights of the Jewish Church and State, have been transferred by literalists to astronomical phenomena. One must also reckon in the probability that the Evangelists' report has been coloured here and there by the ideas with which the Jewish mind had been imbued by the apocalyptic literature of the time concerning the judgment of the world by the Messiah. Granting this, however, where would an unbiased mind look for the most colourless and true representation of Jesus' thought of the transition from the present order of things to a better? In his parables, at least, we should expect to find it undistorted. Now it is just in these that Jesus' idea is manifestly that of a gradual growth. See his parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (Matthew xiii. 31-34), and of the seed silently unfolding into blade, ear, and grain (Mark iv. 26-30). The conception of the "Kingdom of Heaven," the sovereignty of truth and right, as coming by an evolutionary process, was as foreign to that age as it is familiar to this, and it is unmistakably Jesus' own. Says Dr. E. Caird<sup>1</sup> of this: "It is not too much to say

<sup>1</sup> "Evolution of Religion," ii., p. 235.



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that in some of his [Jesus'] words the idea, that true progress is possible only by development, is more clearly expressed than it ever was by anyone down to the present century."

Cognate with this allegation of a pessimistic idea of the existing world is the charge that Jesus represented the opposition of the Jews as resulting from an arbitrary divine decree that they should not believe. But one can easily distinguish what Mark reports him as saying (iv. 11, 12) from what he probably said. Matthew (xiii. 14) represents the statement which Mark attributes to Jesus as a statement of Isaiah quoted by Jesus for illustration. In Isaiah (vi. 8-11) it appears to be a bit of poetic sarcasm on popular blindness, not a didactic utterance. Consequently, the most that Jesus is responsible for is his remark in the context, that to some it is not given "to know the mysteries," *i.e.*, the truths imparted by revelation. But this is a fact of common daily observation. Whatever bearing this fact may have on the future destiny of the persons concerned, it is unwarrantable to impute to Jesus any inference from it. He has drawn none neither should we.

So also it is mistakenly objected to Jesus that he taught the thoroughly unethical doctrine of an endless punishment hereafter. The stronghold of this notion is in the Authorized Version of the New Testament, and in the reader's fallacious identification, in the phraseology of the Revised Version, of "eternal," *i.e.*, belonging to or taking place in eternity, with "endless," *i.e.*, lasting through eternity, thus changing a qualitative into a quantitative term. That a portion

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of the Church under the spell of mediæval notions still clings to this fallacy may recommend it to cavillers, but not to enlightened and candid critics, who know that Christian scholars are among its most strenuous opponents. It is antecedently improbable that Jesus borrowed the doctrine of endless punishment from the Jewish schools, for they taught no such doctrine.<sup>1</sup> His teaching is to be ascertained, not by exegesis of the Greek word *αἰώνιος*, but from his explicit affirmations that God evermore seeks that which is his, though seemingly lost, and that "all live unto him" (Luke xv. and xx. 38).

It is contended, however, that Jesus dwells unduly upon rewards and punishments, fails to inculcate the unselfish love of goodness for its own sake, and appeals to mercenary motives. It must be admitted that Jesus habitually appeals to the consequences of moral choice, and the objection to his so doing comes inconsistently from any who hold that utilitarianism is sound ethics. That the utilitarian view may be unselfishly taken, Mr. Spencer and Mr. J. S. Mill bear witness. Moreover, a rational self-love is as obligatory as the love of other selves, its very basis and norm. What kind of self-love Jesus requires is shown in Matthew v. 45, and John xiv. 23, as satisfied in realizing one's filial relation to God. But the objector forgets that moral development cannot begin at the high level. In its embryonic stage, before the habit of goodness is formed, prudential motives are

<sup>1</sup> See Emmanuel Deutsch upon the Talmud, quoted in the Rev. S. Cox's "Salvator Mundi," pp. 70-73.



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indispensable to form it. Only when it is formed can the habitual good act be desired for its own sake apart from consequences. What would be thought of a parent who did not frequently warn a child of the ill consequences of despising good counsel? Or what influence could be gained over a coarse or brutish nature by appealing only to the higher motives to which it is indifferent? The motive must correspond to the stage of evolution. Prudential motives are unworthy only as a finality, but not as a means to progress.

It is objected again that Jesus is a faulty teacher in giving approval to selfish and even dishonest conduct. One case is the parable of the Hid Treasure (Matthew xiii. 44). But note that Jesus limits himself to the conduct of the discoverer in making his discovery available. His further conduct in disposing of it, whether he was fair and generous to the seller, or not, is not touched, and did not require to be. Ought the discoverer to have given away his discovery, or was he entitled to benefit by it? If the latter, was it not a just way to begin by buying the ground at the owner's price? It is only this initial proceeding that Jesus deals with. The other case looks more plausible for the objector, as some orthodox expositors of the parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke xvi. 1-9) have furnished him his ground. They assume what he objects to as a dishonest proceeding, viz., that the steward's abatement of the tenants' rents was made at his master's cost, although they plead that this feature of the case was not what Jesus approved, but rather the prudence of the man in providing for his

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time of need. Surely, the objector may say that Jesus could easily have taken a case of honest prudence to point his lesson. But it is wholly gratuitous to assume that this was a case of dishonest prudence. The contrary assumption is quite as plausible. What the steward did was not at his master's cost but his own, viz., a remission of his extortionate overcharges, which, had he continued in office, he would furtively have pocketed. That this was the real case appears from the fact that his master commended him. Surely, he could not have commended conduct which would have robbed him of his just dues. This view of the case, as the prompt undoing of wrong, is as congruous with Jesus' character as the other view is incongruous. But here, as elsewhere, some objectors reason in a circle; first assuming that Jesus was ethically imperfect, and then interpreting him so as to square with that assumption.

Akin to the foregoing is the allegation that Jesus makes little account of intellectual scrupulousness and honesty. At any rate, he was concerned for moral scrupulousness, as the Sermon on the Mount, and not that alone, bears witness; but moral scrupulousness is the root of intellectual. It is also certain that the vices of publicans and harlots did not draw from him warnings so frequent and censures so severe as the hypocrisy of those who taught what they did not practise, and professed what they did not possess. From the peasant woman of Samaria to the imperial governor sitting as his judge, his testimony was characteristically given for truth: "They that worship

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God must worship in spirit and in truth ” ; “ To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth ” (John iv. 24 ; xviii. 37). It is not easy to be respectful to an objector who seems to ignore what is so prominent in the record. Perhaps, however, it is deemed a fault that Jesus did not always make his meaning clear to his hearers ; he was often figurative, enigmatical, paradoxical ; he left false impressions, and did not correct them. In other words, a man so far above his contemporaries that in many cases they could not have understood him did not attempt the impossible. That he so understood the situation he repeatedly intimated : “ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear ” ; “ Do ye not yet perceive ? ” “ Doth this cause you to stumble ? The words that I have spoken are spirit.” Even among persons of culture and probity the photographing of one’s thought on another mind, especially where the one is a stranger to the experience of the other, is so difficult that all bear witness to the poet’s saying :

Words, like Nature, half reveal  
And half conceal the soul within.

What reason, then, to complain of the spiritual seer, who, in addressing minds immured in their senses, their prejudices, or their vices, speaks in figure, enigma, paradox ? It is not possible always to state truth to such so that it shall not be paradoxical. What an enigma, a paradox, Tennyson’s address to the flower in the crannied wall is to the prosaic soul, to whom the primrose is “ a yellow primrose, nothing more ” !

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But the objection to Jesus on the score of intellectual scrupulousness takes another form. He is accused of lacking intellectual balance and sanity. The charge is rested on two prominent characteristics of his teaching: his alleged self-assertion, and his prediction of his return, or coming again—the so-called Second Advent.

It is said that no man conscious of human weakness and limitation could sanely say, "I am the bread which came down from heaven"; "I am the light of the world"; "I am the resurrection and the life." It is said that the fundamental virtue is humility, and that no genuinely humble man could utter such extraordinary self-assertion. The Church has admitted it, and Canon Liddon, in his Bampton Lectures on "The Divinity of Our Lord," declares that, if Jesus were not very God as well as very man, he could not have been even a good man. The admission as well as the objection must be revised and withdrawn.

The unique and extraordinary feature in the Gospel sketches of Jesus is, as has already been pointed out, his consciousness of an eternal humanity, a oneness of nature and spirit with God, transcending the limits of time before and after. He seemed to realize for himself, what is doubtless true of human nature itself, an existence from eternity in God, as "the Son of man who is in heaven," "the Son who is in the bosom of the Father." The Church has explained this fact of Jesus' consciousness mechanically by supposing a union of God and man in him effected through a physiological miracle. We may better

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explain it vitally : Jesus was conscious of God as living in him, and of himself as living in God, in the unity of the one eternal life. The epithet "God-intoxicated" has been applied to Spinoza. Much more fitly might Jesus be called God-enthused. Just judgment requires a man to be judged by his peers ; but who is Jesus' peer in this respect ? And so the utterance of his calm consciousness of God seems at least ecstatic to those who share it not ; to the Jews it seemed blasphemous. Yet a fact of consciousness is entitled to as much respect as a fact of physics. Shall Jesus, then, be pronounced arrogant or insane for the utterance of a God-consciousness such as no other man of God has ever shown ?

For it is to be expressly noted that his self-assertion, so-called, is not self-assertion, but God-assertion. Speaking of himself, he repeatedly disclaimed the knowledge or power which he assigned to God (Matthew xxiv. 36 ; Mark x. 40). He declared that by himself he was nothing, nor did he speak from himself, but from the Father who was in him (John v. 30 ; viii. 28 ; xiv. 10). This is the vital fact, ignored by the objector to these utterances of a life whose conscious springs were all in God. Not as a merely individual man, nor merely as a man of God, but as a man *in* God as no other man has consciously been, does Jesus say, "I am the light of the world," reverently explaining himself to mean, "Not I by myself, but rather the Father who is in me."

Jesus' other peculiar utterance, on which the charge of lacking intellectual sanity has been based, is his prediction of another coming to earth. In this also

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the objector finds his ground prepared for him by the pretensions of many Christian people, Adventists and Millenarians. Not only so, but it is plain enough from their epistles that the Apostles themselves expected the return of their Master to earth in the course of a few years, to be the judge of a world still abandoned to its sins (*e.g.*, 2 Thessalonians i. 7-10). Evidently he must have said what they so understood, but the question is, whether they only were the subjects of an extraordinary illusion, or he as well as they.

On comparing the various statements, we find a wide difference in the Evangelists. The Fourth Gospel makes Jesus speak of a coming again which is evidently of a spiritual sort (John xiv. 3, 19, 23). The other three record his predictions of a coming in the clouds, and on a throne of glory with attendant angels (Matthew xxv. 31; Mark xiv. 62). If these contrasted ideas seem incongruous, two questions arise: (1) Which is more in accord with the real thought of Jesus? (2) How are we to account for the representation given in the first three Gospels? As to the first question, it is noteworthy that Jesus declared that a spiritual return of Elijah had already taken place in the advent of John the Baptist, in whom the bold, fiery spirit of the ancient reformer lived again. It is remarkable also that this idea occurs, not in John, but in the Synoptic Gospels themselves (Matthew xvii. 10-14; Mark ix. 11-14). If now, as we undoubtedly must, we give preference to the idea of a return in spirit rather than in form as the real thought of Jesus, this reference to Elijah



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is very significant for his view of his own future advent.

As to the second question,—the genesis of the Synoptic representation of the return of Jesus in visible majesty,—what has been already said about Jesus' teaching of "the end of the world," *i.e.*, the Jewish, not the terrestrial world, must be borne in mind. The minds of devout Israelites were imbued with the current apocalyptic literature, in which the advent of the Messiah to judge the world was a prominent trait. It is easily conceivable that Jesus, in predicting the overthrow of the Jewish institutions with the fall of their holy city, borrowed the symbolical language in which the ancient prophets had foretold a similar catastrophe, prefiguring the quenching of the great lights of Church and State as the darkening of the sun, etc. But the spiritual coming of which he spoke, progressively realized in the diffusion of the spirit of Christianity through the preaching of the Gospel, synchronized with this catastrophe of Judaism, for the Cross rose as the Temple fell. This view of the matter, however, like many of his teachings, the disciples were unlikely to grasp. The only alternative conception within their reach was the Jewish apocalyptic fancy of the advent of the Messiah upon a visible judgment-seat. It is not easy to doubt that they so construed the matter, and in course of time coloured their remembrance and report accordingly. Paul's letter to Thessalonica shows it, and so does Peter's belief, "The end of all things is at hand." At any rate, the choice lies for us between this reasonable view of the matter and attributing to Jesus an

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enthusiastic extravagance of thought, to which nothing else in his teaching bears resemblance. "The whole teaching of Jesus," says Dr. E. Caird, "might be described as one continuous effort to extract the kernel from the husk in which it had to grow; to detach the deeper spiritual truth which he sought to convey from the form in which he was obliged to convey it; to raise the Messianic idea above the accidents of its prophetic vesture, and the cruder sensuous interpretation which the popular mind had attached to it."

In the foregoing comments and criticisms notice has been taken, not of all objections to the character of Jesus on ethical grounds, but only to such as it might seem worth while to notice, if even briefly. When, however, a recent writer goes so far as to declare that no great religious teacher has ever so contradicted the Fatherhood of God as Jesus has, and that, wherever the spirit of Christianity survives in its fulness, there is the enemy of justice, of charity, and of human brotherliness, one can hardly be expected to discuss such phantasms seriously.

We have now to gather up the results of our review. The question before us was stated at the outset as twofold: (1) Whether Jesus as represented in the record is the ideal man, and (2) whether he was really such. As to the first, it appears that there are occasional features of the record which may be criticized as moral blemishes, but that the record itself enables a duly objective criticism to show these as due to an imperfect apprehension of the facts, or as belonging to the record rather than to him. As to the second



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question, it is enough to say, "The things that cannot be shaken remain." We can discover nothing which invalidates the judgment of the vast majority of ethical writers, who agree in recognizing Jesus as the one perfect teacher and representative of moral truth and duty. This superiority consisted, as we must still insist, often as it has been said, not in any completeness of precepts given, or of concrete relations sustained in conduct, but in his exhibition of those principles and that spirit which not only supply all due regulation as occasion requires, but give unity, consistency and purity to the moral life.

But for a more complete result attention is due to a further consideration which now emerges. The period of Jesus' life which the record covers is very brief. His historical career is comprised within three years, and of these the accounts which have come down to us include little more than a month in all of separate days. In view of this it is asked whether upon so fragmentary accounts we can claim to have demonstrated the sinlessness of Jesus throughout his life. Clearly we cannot. Whatever inference anyone may think himself able to draw is merely an inference of debatable probability. It must be frankly admitted that the material does not exist for any induction of facts to the sweeping generalization that from first to last Jesus' life was a faultless life. There are even indications that make this somewhat questionable. Luke states (ii. 52) that in his youth Jesus "advanced in favour with God and man." Matthew says (iii. 15) that he sought John's "baptism of repentance" (Luke iii. 3) with the declaration, "Thus it becometh

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us to fulfil all righteousness"—words back of which there may or may not have lain some rueful memory. To this the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews adds that "he learned obedience," and was "made perfect." Upon such statements we must not dogmatize on *a priori* grounds. We have no ground to assert that in his immaturity Jesus was altogether exempt from every fault into which a spirit aspiring toward perfect purity may fall. In our utter ignorance of the facts, this must be candidly admitted. But the question before us concerns the historical period of his life, and that only. Was he, or was he not, for that period, or rather in the portions of it put before us in the record, the perfect teacher, the faultless example, the ideal man, whom many generations of saints have revered as such? We know that the moral ideals of the past have not proved adequate to the demand of growing moral insight. And so we must sympathize with the questioner, who, in longing for the truly perfect ideal, earnestly scrutinizes the ancient record for verification of the traditional belief in Jesus' moral perfectness. But the record, when criticism has done its legitimate work thereon, fully sustains the belief. In confirmation of this judgment one may compare Kant's formula for moral action, "Act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation," with the saying of Mr. J. S. Mill, that a man could not have a better rule of conduct than so to act as to obtain the approval of Jesus Christ. The universality thus recognized is a decisive trait of the ideal.

But here one encounters a final objection. "What

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we require to know," says a recent writer,<sup>1</sup> "is not only, was Jesus' life righteous, pure-hearted and loving, but that it reached ideal perfection. It must have been throughout and every moment surcharged with the absolute consciousness of the presence of God. There must have been never a fall from the heights of perfect sympathy, trust, hope, enthusiasm." But "he was subject to waves of depression, as the man sure of divine approval is not." This seems to forget that the ideal *man* is ideal in his coping with human conditions, not in his exemption from them. Exempt he cannot be from that law of periodicity to which the earth itself and all life upon it are subject.

The shores of thought and being know  
The Spirit's tidal ebb and flow.

What concerns us is, not the ideal man in heaven, but the ideal man on earth, where it is sometimes night; not the ideal man in his ultimate, consummate state, but rather in his present, advancing state, advancing through struggle. The essential requisite in this ideal man is that he should be imitable, through a sympathy the ground of which is in the experience of a common condition. It is precisely in this point of view that the New Testament represents Jesus as the ideal man, because at once subjected to earthly limitations and vicissitudes, yet ever victoriously rising above them. The demand for an ideal not thus subjected is a self-defeating demand. The ideal which it contemplates would be no ideal at all, simply because unearthly, and so inimitable.

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. C. F. Dole, in *The New World*, September, 1896.

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Finally, to leave at the end of this discussion a clear conception of the position which it has simply endeavoured to free from objections, what has been said most admirably by Dr. E. Caird, in his lecture on "The Divine and the Human,"<sup>1</sup> may be succinctly quoted: "By him [Jesus], as by no other individual before, the pure idea of a divine humanity was apprehended and made into the great principle of life. . . . In fact, it *was* through Jesus Christ that that capacity of men to become sons of God, which was in humanity from the first, was actualized or clearly revealed. . . . Christ is divine *just because* he is the most human of men, the man in whom the universal spirit of humanity has found its fullest expression; . . . on the other hand, he is the ideal or typical man, the Son of Man, who reveals what is in humanity, *just because* he is the purest revelation of God in man."

<sup>1</sup> "Evolution of Religion," ii., pp. 230, 231, 233.

Jesus' God-Consciousness a Human  
Attainment



## XI

### JESUS' GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS A HUMAN ATTAINMENT <sup>1</sup>

AN eminent Trinitarian<sup>2</sup> has called attention to the imitableness of Jesus as a long-lost and recently recovered truth, and to its recovery as a "vast service that Unitarianism has rendered to the Christian belief of the century." It is, as he says, a truth which "has far less to fear from the avowed enemies of a high morality than from a narrow religious zeal." It is inseparable from the truth of the normal humanity of Jesus, a truth likewise long submerged, and but recently regained. If in any point Jesus were not normally human throughout, were he not wholly as subject as we to human conditions in the ability to draw upon divine resources of knowledge and power, then, of course, he could not be entirely imitable. The question of his entire imitableness is therefore more than a problem of theology; it is also a fundamental question of practical discipleship to him, and is here taken up with that interest mainly in view. It is far from being a settled question, vital as it is.

The central problem presented in the life of Jesus lies in his asseverations of intimate relationship and

<sup>1</sup> From *The American Journal of Theology*, April, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. George A. Gordon, in "The Christ of To-day," pp. 70, 71.

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I entire unity with God. Many would deny that there is a problem here. Here, they would say, are simply the utterances of an exceptional being, who comes to us from a higher world. Nevertheless, a problem is apparent still. For the extraordinary consciousness of God which is discovered in Jesus is the product of a mind genuinely and thoroughly human, well poised and sane. As a phenomenon of such a mind there is at least no *prima facie* ground for denying it to be essentially reproducible. The problem must therefore be approached in entire detachment from dogmatic prepossessions and controversial interests. This is the first condition of a trustworthy judgment.

The second condition is, that clear distinction be made between the *actual* and the *potential* in human nature. Whenever we contrast present conditions with the past, whether remote or comparatively recent, we recognize the progress of a great ethico-spiritual development, of which, as Tennyson's well-known poem says, we even now see "dawn, not day." Those who in this discern the fact that he affirms

Man as yet is being made,

and that the spiritual creation of man is still in its early stages, cannot reasonably affirm that what is superhuman now, as compared with the present spiritual level, will be superhuman to "the crowning race" of men who have worked out the beast, and "let the ape and tiger die." Admitting this, however, we must also admit, with that free critic of traditional beliefs, Professor Wernle: "It is impossible that a time should ever come when any single Christian



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should acquire for his fellow Christians the significance of Jesus."

That Jesus made upon the disciples whose thoughts of him are on record the impression of a transcendent being is undeniable. Greater than Moses was he to them. His post-crucifixion appearances, whether they were corporeal or apparitional, were of a sort which convinced them that he had risen into the heavens from the common mansion of the dead in the supposed underworld. Whether the Gospel saying, "I am the resurrection and the life," be his very words, as the Church believes, or, as some critics say, the expression of a mind that had deeply imbibed his thought, they seemingly express the consciousness of a personality transcending human limits. Granting this, it cannot be granted as determinative of our present problem. Holding to the discrimination already made between the actual and the potential in human nature, we must reasonably hold this also, that the verdict of those first disciples is not absolute, but relative to their stage and time. Dr. Gordon, indeed, asserts that, as compared with Jesus, "incompleteness must be the note of our human existence through all time." For this no conclusive ground has ever been adduced. When the Roman Catholic poet Faber writes :

We share in what is infinite, 'tis ours,

he evidently transcends the limit of Hebrew thought, even among the Apostles. Here is a fact positively adverse to regarding any present stage of experience as the final limit of the God-consciousness that has grown thus far. That the truth of its unlimited growth was

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glimpsed by the foremost imitator of Jesus, certain sayings of St. Paul<sup>1</sup> evince.

Under these conditions of clear thinking and trustworthy judgment we have now to reflect further on the final question concerning the imitableness of Jesus : Is there any limit to it ? Is it reproducible in *consciousness* as well as in conduct ?

His imitableness, an axiom of primitive Christianity, has been reinstated in Christian conviction, at least in the sphere of conduct, as a principle essential to the development of Christian character. But conduct is not the whole of character. Conduct is the embodiment of consciousness ; it is motivated and sustained by consciousness. Imitableness that goes no deeper than conduct is not worth effort or consideration. Unless Jesus be fully imitable in consciousness, it does not appear how he can be fully imitable in conduct. A practical question of fundamental ethical importance is thus involved in the present inquiry.

We approach the heart of this question in making account of two facts : (1) Jesus was born into a religious community which had always given exclusive emphasis to the divine Transcendence, and that of an extramundane sort ; (2) Jesus for the first time laid equal emphasis upon the divine Immanence—God *in* him, as well as beyond him. Of this truth Jesus makes himself the representative, especially in the extent

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians iii. 19 ; iv. 13 ; Philippians iii. 12-14.

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to which he carries his use of the terms "father" and "son" to express the relation between God and himself. Domestic affection and human sympathy have familiarized the world with the ideal of

Two souls with but a single thought,  
Two hearts that beat as one.

In transferring this ideal from time to eternity, in extending it to include humanity and deity in spiritual unity, Jesus has set himself apart from all other religious teachers, while joining them all in reverential recognition of the divine transcendence: "My Father is greater than I." How foreign his thought of God to the thought of his hearers appears in their impulse to stone him for blasphemy when he said: "I and the Father are one." His uniqueness essentially consists in this peculiar consciousness, from which issue the expressions of his entire unity with God that still excite the world's wonder: "What my Father does I do. What I say he says through me. We two are one. Would you know his mind? Behold mine. Would you know what he requires? See what I do." Conceivable enough in the sympathetic friendship of man with man, such a consciousness of unity in thought and deed is declared untransferable to the relations of humanity and deity.

On the one hand, it has been held, since the time of the early œcumenical creeds, that deity and humanity are essentially different natures, and that such a consciousness is impossible except in a person in whom the two natures are conjoined, as it is affirmed they were conjoined in Jesus, the one and only "God-man."

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On the other hand, it is affirmed by many modern critics that the expressions of a peculiar consciousness of God which, especially in the Fourth Gospel, are ascribed to Jesus, are of doubtful authenticity. Accordingly they rule the present inquiry out of order until the authenticity has been settled by critical investigation. To such summary closing of the question there is a reasonable demurrer. One may have grave doubts of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, and yet claim that a question of spiritual or ethical authority is wholly independent of any conclusion about its literary vehicle. The question which any one of the so-called "lost arts" raises as to its reproducibility depends not at all on identification of the forgotten artist. And so, when many, as now, declare the Fourth Gospel to be the work of an unknown religious romancer, and its expressions of Jesus' God-consciousness to be mere theosophical speculation, utterly unhistorical, one may with entire reason rejoin: Even so, the question of the imitableness of such a consciousness is not thereby settled. To discard these controverted sentences does not annihilate them. Even if no part of Jesus' history, they are still historical, for *they exist*, and have long been before the world in manuscripts centuries older than any others now existing. Ascribed to Jesus, they are ascribed to him as a man in peculiar relation to God, a Jew whom favourably disposed contemporaries, like Nicodemus, classing him as a rabbi, addressed as "a teacher come from God." The sayings in question exist in the story of a human life, whose varying conditions of activity and trial

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seem to say, in the words of the Roman procurator, "Ecce homo." Constantly they breathe forth the feeling of an ideal sonship to God, closer and dearer than any other that any literature has preserved. Even were they, as contended, not identifiable with any human name, yet simply as an ideal would they possess, especially to whomsoever the thought of filial relationship to God is dear, the imperativeness which conscience accords to every pure and high ideal, when once presented. They demand imitation, if not of the real Jesus, then of one who has been supposed to be Jesus. Such considerations not only justify but require the ruling out, as irrelevant to the present inquiry, of the demand that the authorship of the document presenting such an ideal shall be settled before it can be treated as of practical importance.

But something more than that it is now irrelevant must be said of the contention that such sayings of Jesus are "unhistorical." A noteworthy specimen of them is in a sentence of Jesus' prayer for his disciples at the Last Supper : " The glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one." <sup>1</sup> Observe the dominating note here ; it is practical, not theosophical, the unification, the solidarity of the disciples, in lives all centred in God, with the moral purpose that is given in the context, " Keep them from the evil." Here it is strikingly significant that the underlying ideas are

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 22, 23.

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precisely those to which modern science and philosophy are bringing the thought of our day—the unity of all lives in a common life, the identity of moral nature in man and God, the immanence of deity. But these were notoriously not the ideas either of the second century or of the first. Whoever expressed them then—whether Jesus, or, as some critics allege, a Christian writer now unknown—they certainly constitute, in the history of human thought, a phenomenon extraordinary at that time, and simply as such entitled to more recognition than it receives. Whether uttered by Jesus, or by another, this, at least, is certain: no name of that period except Jesus is found elevated above the mental and spiritual limitations of the time sufficiently to have been capable of uttering them. It is mere dogmatism to declare him incapable. Probability is largely on the side of the tradition which reports them as substantially his. In the following discussion they may, for convenience, at least, be reasonably referred to as his, especially as the contention which would rule them out must be deemed irrelevant to the main question now before us. Here, however, may be cited the judgment of Professor Wernle, of Basel, in a work free from all bias toward orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> This admits, as “the mystery of Christianity,” that the Synoptic Gospels by themselves exhibit in Jesus “a self-consciousness that is more than merely human”—a fact, he says, to be accepted as such. In quoting this recognition in the first three Gospels of what is here under discussion as predominantly

<sup>1</sup> “The Beginnings of Christianity,” Vol. I., p. 39.

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characteristic of the fourth, its implication is by no means accepted, that there is any such thing in reality as the "merely human" in apartness from God. That in the view of the Evangelists Jesus' God-consciousness was superhuman can hardly be doubted. The present question is: Was it absolutely such, or only relatively to theirs? In other words, is it fully imitable?

The formula most briefly expressing this consciousness is Jesus' reiterated saying: "I am in the Father, and the Father in me."<sup>1</sup> But sayings of the apostles exhibit close parallels to this. The first half of it is closely reproduced in Paul's words: "In him we live, and move, and have our being."<sup>2</sup> With the entire sentence various sayings in John's first epistle accord—*e.g.*: "He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him."<sup>3</sup> This concord of the Apostles and their Master shows in him and in them the same God-consciousness, but with a difference—a difference that may explain the peculiar eminence held by Jesus in the thought of his disciples. It is one thing to possess a truth, another thing to be possessed by that truth. Of this we find in ourselves abundant proof. Call to mind Tennyson's verses on "The Higher Pantheism," and its oft-quoted line:

Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet.

We thus affirm the immanence of God in ourselves; but how feebly we realize our affirmation, how slight

<sup>1</sup> John x. 38; xiv. 11; xvii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 28. <sup>3</sup> 1 John iv. 16.



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and transient its hold on our thought ! Intellectually we conceive ourselves embosomed in Infinite Being, but the conception does not so cling to the mind as to root itself in the feeling which is the subsoil of clear thought. Is it, then, affirming aught more than known mental laws warrant, if we say that the intensity of Jesus' God-consciousness is, in the first place, due to that intensity of thought which succeeds in self-saturation with a sublime truth ? What a raw and untoward nature might not attain in any such endeavour, might reward the effort of a refined and susceptible nature to realize in itself the Pauline conception of being "filled unto all the fulness of God." <sup>1</sup> What might not be reached by one crowded with passing interests and cumbered with much serving, might be attained by another oft in the vigils of devotion, as was Jesus, and greatly given to prayer. Temperament, also, with its variable psychological conditions, is a factor of large account, as the history of religious mysticism shows. Imperfect as is our record of Jesus' life, little more than a month of days in all, it credits him with all the conditions now conceivable for a rare attainment in the highest branch of knowledge—the knowledge of God.

There have been many men of God. Here appears to be a man *in* God, consciously so as no other has been, and so speaking consciously out of God as no other has spoken. From such a consciousness proceeds what is loosely termed his "self-assertion": "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life"—not to be

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 19.



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deemed mere self-assertion in one who subjoins :  
"The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself, but the Father abiding in me doeth his works." If Paul could say of himself, "We have the mind of Christ,"<sup>1</sup> with no less reason might Jesus say that he had the mind of his heavenly Father, and spoke of himself only as God thought of him. In this we cannot judge him. It is well if we submit to be judged by one of deeper insight and larger knowledge than our own. The religious insight of saints and mystics is not accountable to intellectual analysis or test. Feeling, consciousness, ecstatic intuition, are facts that burst all prescribed or customary forms. But it is not to be forgotten here that the fundamental consciousness uttered in the sentence, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me," does not, even in a merely intellectual view, overpass the truths acknowledged to-day : the immanence of deity, the identity of our moral nature with the divine, the unity of life through all its manifestations from the lowest sentience and intelligence to the highest. Even that surprising word, "Before Abraham was I am,"<sup>2</sup> might, apart from any idea of individual pre-existence, conceivably find such vindication as moments of rapturous insight may obtain ; either, as Professor Gilbert says,<sup>3</sup> in the conception of an ideal pre-existence in the Eternal Purpose, or else in a conception of the divinely inbreathed life that in mortal form thinks

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 58 ; "was" = was born, R.V. margin.

<sup>3</sup> "The Revelation of Jesus," p. 214.

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the thought of God to-day, as being in itself co-eternal with the divine life whose thought it thinks.

But, furthermore, it is clear that the God-consciousness manifested in Jesus is no merely intellectual product, though not without an intellectual ground. Grounded in an insight verified in our time, though transcending the thought of his time, which conceived of man as clay-born, and alien in nature to God, it is evidently fed and winged by devotional affection. Jesus does not say with his Apostles, "I am in God, and God in me," but, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me." Here the difference between them and him begins to appear. They noted it from the first, drawing, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a contrast between Moses, who was faithful as a servant, and Christ, who was faithful as a son.<sup>1</sup> Mere intensity of thought to the point of saturation with an idea might produce the speculative consciousness of a Spinoza—the "pure intellectual love," in which he became "God-intoxicated," as Novalis called him. But Jesus' consciousness of his Father was marked by an emotional, filial affection, and is therefore of a different type. God-consciousness that is merely speculative gravitates inevitably toward pantheism like Spinoza's, like that of Hinduism in Emerson's well-known poem, "Brahma":

They reckon ill who leave me out.  
When me they fly, I am the wings:  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iii. 5, 6.

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Speculative thought needs the wings of feeling to keep it from falling into this blank abyss of indistinguishable being ; needs a clear-eyed emotion that discerns and strives to close with its object as other than self, and desires it for the satisfaction of self. The love of God by man, as of one being by another, is foreign to pantheism. But Jesus is no pantheist. An emotional element of thought added to, or rather suffusing, the intellectual is conspicuous in his consciousness of God. His characteristic appellation of deity, and the tone of filial sympathy in which his lips utter the word " Father," attest it. Furthermore, nothing less than profound and glowing affection can absorb the whole man, as Jesus was absorbed in his thought of his Father and himself as mutually indwelling in each other, and mutually delighting in each other. Only the high temperature of ecstatic filial feeling, raised by hours of vigil and prayer uninterrupted by distracting cares, could conceivably generate—and one can hardly disbelieve it adequate to generate—the sublime utterances which to most have seemed indicative of a descent from heavenly, rather than of an ascent from earthly conditions. He is not only the one member of our race who has made the truth that our humanity eternally exists in God a dominant regulative of his thought. He is also the one man to whom this truth has endeared itself in the depths of feeling, saturating his soul with its sweetness, and uttering itself in the expressions of a filial consciousness as from the bosom of paternal love. Unique is he in this, but is he also imitable ?

In type and kind, no doubt, he is. So God is

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imitable. Science strives to imitate the way and work of God in nature, yet with what disparity in result ! The finest needle-point we can make appears under the microscope as rough and blunt as a crowbar beside God's perfect work in the gnat's lancet. Jesus and his Apostles propose God's work and way in the moral world as our model: "Ye shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>1</sup> "Be ye imitators of God as beloved children."<sup>2</sup> Here also, however studious imitators in type and kind, how far short are we in degree and result ! The imitableness of Jesus' God-consciousness at least in type and kind may not be doubted. But does not even this admission fix a point far short of which Christian endeavour seems content to rest ? One cannot say that any remarkable number of Jesus' disciples have advanced beyond the Old Testament sage, who realized that "the eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good."<sup>3</sup> But the consciousness of Jesus certainly apprehended much more than the divine omnipresence. We, too, endeavouring to realize the Pauline maxim, "in him we live," have gone intellectually beyond that in our affirmation of the divine immanence. In our theology this is now much set by, but its value and power as factor in religious feeling, and as fuel for spiritual life, still wait for appreciation.

The contention that the God-consciousness of Jesus is forever irreproducible, even in a perfected humanity, can be maintained only on one ground—a ground

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 48.    <sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 1.    <sup>3</sup> Prov. xv. 3.

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restricting the imitableness of Jesus in conduct also—the fifth century affirmation of “two natures” in Jesus, mysteriously conjoined in a union in which the divine element energized in ways impossible to the human, so that divine resources were open to Jesus that are closed to all other men. But modern theism repudiates that notion of the “two natures in one person” as a fallacy which, as Professor A. V. G. Allen has said, “sanctified divorce between the divine and the human, secular and religious, body and spirit.”<sup>1</sup> Humanity and deity are one nature. Moral nature through all its ranges is one and the same. Life, whether in the self-existent fount or in the derived streamlet, is one. The living God enshrines his thought in increasing measure in all the forms that exhibit, from the least to the greatest, the ascent of the unitary life inbreathed by him. Moreover, “the image of God” in man, in which the foundation lines of his being were laid, is still incomplete—a thing not of original but of ultimate realization.

Man as yet is being made, and, ere the crowning age of ages,  
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?

Still, as in the apostolic age, “the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God,”<sup>2</sup> the God who lives, however unrecognized, in us, and in whom, however unconsciously, we live. Who that soberly estimates the present embryonic or infantile development of spiritual man—barely three centuries removed, as we are, from the time when

<sup>1</sup> “Continuity of Christian Thought,” p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 19.

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Christians were burned for heresy by fellow Christians, and not yet so advanced but that religious men are still ostracized by religious men for differences of opinion concerning theological mysteries—can reasonably appeal to experience as certifying denial that the God-consciousness of Jesus is reproducible in degree as well as in kind? More reasonably we may say, it is reproducible because its *conditions* are not irreproducible. On the one hand, the intellectual ground of its possibility exists in the data of an enlightened theism. On the other hand, the emotional ground is given in the recorded practices of converse with God by which Jesus cultivated it, until the sublime truth which he, not alone among men, possessed, possessed him, as it has never yet possessed another, raising him to a peculiar spiritual exaltation as the supreme revelation of the Eternal Spirit in a human life to a mortal world.

Here we may not neglect to take account of the fact that the intellectual element in Jesus' God-consciousness was conditioned by limited knowledge of the universe. God's Book of Nature was certainly not so open to his view as it is to the eye of modern science. The bright star Arcturus, of which he had read in Job, was to him, as to his countrymen, a mere cresset nightly lighted a little way above the clouds. To us it is an orb a million times outbulking the sun, and so distant that its light, flashing twelve million miles a minute, requires one hundred and sixty years to reach us, while yet it is among the nearer stations of the stellar universe. Our thought of the Upholding Spirit, whose might pervades these immeasurable

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heights and depths, vastly transcends the thought of one to whom the All was grouped within narrow bounds about our tiny world—a limitation which doubtless helped to bring the Father of all more easily within Jesus' intellectual apprehension. Yet this can hardly put us at disadvantage emotionally as compared with him. For Infinite Spirit is as perfect in one attribute as in another. The immensity of star-gemmed space doubtless tends at first to oppress and overwhelm the mind with the physical majesty of him who generates, guides and governs all. We recover filial confidence in reflecting that his moral majesty must be proportionate thereto. So thought the psalmist in looking upon the grandest objects in his little world: "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." We must turn to the same reinspiring thought, that the infinite power revealed to science in our universe is wielded by an equal greatness of goodness and love, and that the throne of transcendent might is also the mercy-seat of an equally transcendent paternal sympathy.

Finally, it needs be distinctly and seriously recognized that it is not merely a speculative interest, but, still more, a profoundly practical interest, that is involved in this inquiry. Whoever regards Jesus as the supreme exemplar of mankind, the ideal man, of whom John Stuart Mill confessed that there was no higher rule for human conduct than to aim at approval by Jesus Christ, may well inquire: What was Jesus' secret? How did he become what he has been in all after-time? Even so free a critic as Professor Wernle



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goes to the length of saying : " It is impossible that a time should ever come when any single Christian should acquire for his fellow Christians the significance of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Does not his secret shine forth in that consciousness of the divine indwelling, and that moral oneness with the Father, which was so uniquely developed in him as to have made him the spiritual head of the race to which he wholly belongs ? What conclusion, then, is more reasonable than this, that all successful imitation of him in moral effort and religious aspiration must be sustained, in just the degree that it approaches its goal, by imitating his cultivation of the inner source and spring and stimulus of such effort and aspiration—the consciousness of self as in God, and of God as in self ; nay, more—of what Jesus thought and felt in filial sympathy and joy, "*I am in the Father, and the Father in me*" ?

In the surprises and shocks, the emergencies and crises of life, amid distracting interests and besetting infirmities, on many a trivial occasion when off one's guard, who is ever consistent to his purpose and true to his ideal in any line whatever, except through the poise and the power supplied by a cherished consciousness that has rooted itself with the tenacity of instinct in the core of his being—a consciousness often illustrated in the records of devoted patriotism, of maternal affection, of heroic philanthropy—by which in each case the good will becomes automatic and indeflectible amid all the winds of impulse to deviate from its purposed line ? As a practicable way of gaining such

<sup>1</sup> " The Beginnings of Christianity," Vol. I., p. 38.



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stability the cultivation of a consciousness of the divine omnipresence has been recommended—a “practising the presence of God,” as it has been called. Effective as this may be for repression of passion, for control of desire, for fidelity to duty,

As ever in the Great Taskmaster's eye,

it is doubtful if it rises above the attainment of self-control; doubtful if it is adequate to full self-realization; for this must go along with self-knowledge, especially, of self as in God, and God as in self, knowledge in which feeling is, as it was in Jesus, the vitalizing factor. If it be true, as has been said, that “to be ourselves we must be more than ourselves,” we must also know that we are more than ourselves. Of such self-knowledge elect souls of various types of greatness have had glimpses in exalted moments, when they have felt a power not their own pouring its currents through all their faculties, and have confessed that in oneness with it they were more than themselves. Evidently the self-realization of Jesus, attained through a prayerfully cultivated consciousness of the embosoming, indwelling, and inworking Father, is of this human type, and therefore not hopelessly and forever beyond human attainment. It is the glory of Jesus, in revealing the fundamental truth of the kinship, the unity, of humanity and deity, that he exhibits in himself the power of this truth to uplift the human to the divine, to irradiate the human with the divine. What Athanasius said of Jesus, “The Son is the living Will of the Father,” defines the goal of self-realization

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for every disciple who receives from Jesus the uplift of his peculiar thought of God, and the incentive so to use it that the disciple may be as his Master. One who caught that thought exclaimed :

Let each man think himself an act of God,  
His mind a thought, his life a breath of God.

“ I am in the Father, and the Father in me.” In these characteristic words of Jesus none who believes in the immanence of God can consistently fail to recognize at least a truth of human nature. It is our privilege to realize it as a truth of the spirit, a well-spring of life eternal. Being a truth of nature, why should we not repeat it often in the hour of prayer till it begins to quicken the spirit, and to possess the heart with its power and its peace ?

But the first truths of nature are the last truths of moral realization—such a truth, for instance, as the brotherhood of man. While even such a truth is still like a foundling lying at a street door, how pertinent is Jesus’ saying to Nicodemus : “ If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things ? ”<sup>1</sup> But perhaps in those “ ages to come ” of which Paul wrote to the Colossians, of which Tennyson has sung :

If twenty million summers are stored in the sunlight still,  
We are far from the noon of man, there is room for the race to grow,

the mountain-top from which Jesus for nineteen centuries has called to the world, “ Come unto me,” will not seem so inaccessible, nor its air so rarefied and

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 12.

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unbreathable, as it now appears to the dwellers on the dusty plains. The way to it lies open. There is no sign that the way is broken by any impassable chasm intervening. Jesus' word, "The disciple when perfected shall be as his master,"<sup>1</sup> Paul has reaffirmed in the amplest conceivable terms, pointing upward, "till we all attain unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 40. <sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 13.



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## XII

### FALLACIES CONCERNING PRAYER <sup>1</sup>

THE fact revealed by the spectroscope, that the physical elements of the earth exist also in the stars, supports the faith that a moral nature like our own inhabits the universe. That the moral nature which is above the world is a supplicable nature, equally with the moral nature embodied in man, is a thoroughly reasonable assumption. Prayer, therefore, is grounded in reason, and needs only a rational development in thought and in expression.

Professor Joseph Henry has observed that the whole progress of the physical sciences has been a series of interrogations of the Author of nature, in which every intelligent question has received an intelligible answer. This is the point of view in which one may fully accept the saying, "Laborare est orare." Science and Religion offer practically the same prayer—"Show me thy way, O God." The specific difference is in the characteristic interest of each. Science, with its prayer of the intellect, is interested in the progress of knowledge. Religion, with its prayer of the heart, is interested in the progress of moral sympathy with righteousness.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Forum*, May, 1897.

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But when one begins to argue from the universal instinct of mankind, that prayer is a proper function of the life which, as the Stoics held, should be according to nature, one is often withstood by a reference to savages. "See what sort of deities men naturally pray to, and what sort of prayers men naturally offer!" That men thought to be scientific consider this a scientific mode of reasoning is a curious phenomenon. The truly natural is the raw rather than the ripe, in men, if not in grapes! It is as preposterous to go for light on the subject of prayer to such a fact as ancient devil-worship, as to turn to the embryo for a gauge of the genius of Shakespeare.

But whether in the savage who regards his deity as the physical progenitor of his tribe, or in the philosopher who thinks of God as the self-existent Universal Life, origin of all being, and source of all change, prayer assumes community of nature between man and God as constituting a basis of divine sympathy with the world in its stress and strain. And so Cardinal Manning's theory of prayer, that it is a means of realizing man's relation to God, is the most natural one. In this relation, the higher being must be not only the support and refuge of the lower, but also the norm and law. And so, just as natural appetite is necessary to prompt our attention to natural wants, an instinctive craving for God's help is requisite to promote remembrance of our duty to him. It is this craving which gives the first impulse to prayer—chiefly to the petitionary form of it, against which the current objections to prayer are mainly urged. While limiting attention to this, it must be noted that this



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is not the only, or only effective, form of prayer, any more than asking favours is the only form of communion among friends. Indeed, it is not unlikely that in the higher ranges of spiritual development the petitionary element in prayer will be found to grow less and less.

For many ages men have been trying by blundering experiment to realize their relation to God as the Author and Ruler of physical nature, but with partial success. Small wonder if less success has followed similar effort in the moral realm. None, indeed, confess failures in prayer more than those who are most given to it. Such failures prayerful men commonly impute only to their own ignorance and blundering. It is quite probable that the majority of all who pray have not learned to pray rationally any more than to live rationally; but that there is rational prayer is as credible as that there is rational life.

The problem of prayer, continually baffling, continually inviting, is not the only such problem before the world. Science has problems of its own equally tantalizing. But this is a problem of the moral nature, which, as embodied in the world, essays to commune helpfully with the kindred moral nature that is above the world. On such a problem a generation that is still, as Professor Bowne remarks in his "Principles of Ethics," in an embryonic stage of morality will be more reasonable in suspecting its scepticism as raw than in relying on its insight as ripe.

Already, however, the problem has been cleared of some fallacies by the leaders of religious thought. Such fallacies are: (1) the conception that prayer

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to God is comparable with prayer to the ruler of a state, who takes a petition into consideration, and grants or denies it as he judges best ; (2) the notion that prayer aims to bring in an interfering power to alter miraculously the physical order of things ; (3) the idea, akin to this, that prayer for moral betterment, as for the forgiveness of sins, seeks to break the connection of cause and effect, so as to avert the natural consequences of any breach of physical or moral law. Some, with whom we go a mile in this direction, would have us go twain, and draw from the rejection of these fallacies equally fallacious conclusions. It is with these conclusions that we are now concerned.

As to the first, we assume the reality of a divine purpose as sufficiently indicated in the evolution of nature and of man, and that this purpose cannot be contingent or indeterminate. It follows, of course, that a prayer which crosses that purpose is, so far as its object is concerned, a futile effort ; but it does not follow that the prayer which falls in with that purpose is superfluous. Such a notion is a vestige of the naïve thought of God as external to the world, and of the Will of God as static rather than dynamic, aboriginally complete rather than eternally unfolding. It is out of date now, when the theist conceives of all the forces of the universe, in nature or in man, as divine, and thinks of the divine Will as the movement of "an increasing purpose" through all the complex interplay of these forces, whether free or unfree.

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The divine purpose, whatever view we take of it, is realized through various agencies. The prayer which is in line with it serves to focus our will in that line, and to engage us more actively in pursuing it. For instance, the thrice-repeated prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane, "Thy will be done"—so commonly misunderstood as expressing resignation to the inevitable—was simple self-devotement to the thing that was to be done. It nerved him to surrender his life at a crisis when he might easily have escaped. The beneficent consequences which that self-devotement has produced in the religious development of mankind are evidence, not only of a divine purpose realizing itself through his free act, but also of the objective efficacy of prayer that is in line with a divine purpose.

To pray daily for help to act with conscientious uprightness and kindness in daily affairs will be conceded to be conducive thereto. Many allege, however, that it is only a reflex effect upon ourselves which ensues. But this is not a full account of it. Of course, the primary effect of the prayer for uprightness is a reflex effect upon the man who prays; but even if we regard this alone, we can see that it does not end there: something more ensues. The reflex effect in him passes directly outward into an objective effect produced by the uprightness which the prayer has promoted. This effect is extended to other men, and to what they do. It influences the course of human affairs in ever-widening circles. Consequently the reflex effect of prayer upon the prayerful becomes a determining power in the world for the promotion of divine ends. Thus far from being

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superfluous is the prayer which accords with the divine purpose.

As to the second point, there is indeed no interference through prayer with the natural order of things ; but it is fallacious to conclude from this, that whatever there is in our prayers of petition for physical or spiritual benefit is ineffective. Taking up first the physical, let us see if any interference with the ordinary laws of causation is necessarily involved in prayer for the healing of the sick.

Extravagant assertions of the power of prayer for healing have brought it into some discredit. But it is as wide of the mark to say that prayer has no power of that sort, as to say that it has all power. Unqualified, indeed, are St. James's words : " The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." But of course he did not forget that all must die. That prayer will have a curative effect to a certain extent, is the only meaning fairly imputable to him. Every physician will have to say the same, because he knows that auto-suggestion and expectant attention have a certain curative effect. When a bread pill produces the soporific effect of a morphine pill upon the patient who takes it as morphine, what we recognize is a psychical cause of sleep substituted for a physical cause. The bread pill is necessary to bring the psychical cause into action.

Here we see what it is that prayer for the healing of the sick may legitimately undertake to effect ; viz., no breach at all in the order of natural causation, but simply the substitution of a psychical for a physical

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cause of cure. When the case is one to which a psychical cause is adequate, the cure will follow. Of course a condition of its effectiveness is, that the patient must fully believe in the healing power of prayer. At least, the prayer tends to call into activity the psychical powers of auto-suggestion and expectant attention. These are, indeed, equally effective, whether generated through prayer or otherwise; but we are now considering the causative power. If an undevout mind regards prayer in this case as mere incantation, a reverent mind is nearer the truth in holding that "there is no power but of God": whether in the psychical body or the political, "the powers that be are ordained of God."

There is good reason for the hope that the present century will chronicle as remarkable an advance in psychical therapeutics, as the last century did in physical. Though prayer be no panacea, its therapeutic value is well attested. The testimony of Dr. Hyslop, Superintendent of Bethlem Royal Hospital, at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association in 1905—too long to quote in full—may be summed up in a sentence: "As an alienist, and one whose whole life has been concerned with the sufferings of the mind, I would state that of all hygienic measures to counteract disturbed, sleep-depressed spirits, and all the miserable sequels of a distressed mind, I would undoubtedly give the first place to the simple habit of prayer." Psychical therapeutics, however imperfectly understood, hold a place as secure—though not yet so large—as the physical, which a century ago were in a crude state. It is with

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this as yet undeveloped province of the healing art that prayer stands in natural affinity. If it prove inadequate, so do all remedies sometimes. Certain physical remedies are good for those only with whose constitutions they agree ; and this much at least can be said of prayer. It might avail with a believer where it would fail with an unbeliever. Faith is as far from being impotent as from being omnipotent. Vergil said of the winning boat-crew, "They can, because they think they can." There is no field of effort in which this does not hold good.

The point just made, that a physical effect results in certain cases from a psychical cause brought into action by prayer, suggests some criticism of the assertion that it is irrational to pray for rain. This is usually put forward with such airy and even supercilious confidence that one who holds no brief for either side, but is simply concerned for close reasoning, may be justified in a search for weak points. To maintain a universal negative, one must either have universal knowledge, or be able to show an absolute impossibility. Let us see then what is actually known about this.

We know that our wills are among the causes which affect the order of nature within certain limits. By clearing forests we change a climate. By scientific manipulation of physical elements we produce new varieties of plants and animals. It is scientifically held possible to produce rain at times and places where atmospheric conditions are favourable to certain modes of operation. How much now must one know to warrant him in saying that he *knows*, rather than



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supposes, it irrational to pray for rain, in a climate that is not rainless? He must *know*: either (a) that there are no invisible intelligences superior to us; or (b) that, if there be, they are not sympathetically related to us; or (c) that, if they be so related to us, they have no such power as ours to effect changes in physical order according to physical law; or (d) that, if they have, they are not susceptible, like us, to any telepathic influence, such as the wills of a multitude of kindred beings united in fervent prayer might conjecturally exert; or, (e) if they be susceptible, that they are positively inhibited, by some limitation of an unknowable kind, from responsive action; or, (f) if this be not the case, that failure to bring them helpfully into action is not due to an imperfect development of psychical power in us, but to a natural impossibility.

Until we have adequate knowledge in all these particulars, it is certainly premature to dogmatize, either *pro* or *con*. Suspense of judgment is certainly a rational attitude for anyone who bethinks himself that there may be more things in heaven and earth than his philosophy has dreamed of. The rationality of prayer for rain is wholly a question of probability. If indemonstrable, it is also irrefutable. In estimating the worth of the probability, it must be said that none of the open points above stated involves incredibility. At this point, it may be worth noting that the poets for the most part—certainly all the great poets—have firmly held to the objective efficacy of prayer as a power within the natural order of things.

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At any rate,  
That there are beings above us, I believe ;  
And when we lift up holy hands of prayer,  
I will not say they will not give us aid.

Some will probably arch their eyebrows here, and ask if we are not steering toward the Roman Catholic doctrine of the invocation of saints. By no means. That doctrine localizes God ; setting him afar, where he has to be approached by intermediaries. Preferable is the theism of the pagan poet : " All things are full of Jove." We simply refuse to localize God, the Universal Life, energizing through all the powers of the unseen environment, with which we come into conscious correspondence through prayer.

As to the third point : The widespread illusion, that prayer for moral betterment may operate as a cut-off of the evil consequences of an evil life, is a dangerous fallacy ; though many religious teachers have countenanced it. But no less fallacious the illusion, fostered by some esteemed as scientific, that the prayer, " Create in me a clean heart, O God," involves an appeal for miraculous interference. We are told that praying for a changed character and for a change of weather equally attempt the disturbance of natural causation, since character and weather are alike produced by natural causes. Under the term " natural " we are, of course, to include all moral as well as physical causes, however dissimilar these two orders of nature. Is it then supposed by the objector that the petitioner for a clean heart is making no endeavour for it, and fancies that he shall obtain



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it without endeavour? The Scriptures themselves say interchangeably, "Create in me a clean heart," and "Make you a new heart." Why, then, this phrasing of the duty to make the heart clean into a petition to God to make it clean?

The reason is not far to seek. First, this petition is an expressive confession that man apart from God is impotent; that it is not without the divine indwelling and inworking that the normal issues of life come. Next, this confession is also a pledge of our proposed concurrence with him to whom we appeal, and a girding of the will to work with him toward the cleanness of heart we pray for. What more can be demanded here of natural causation adequate to the desired effect on character? Taken merely as words, "Create in me a clean heart" might be construed as a plea for a miraculous work. So might "The sun rises" be construed into assent to the Ptolemaic astronomy. But, as a matter of fact, they are never so used except by the foolish or perverse, or those who from such specimens spin flimsy objections.

The homœopathic rule, *similia similibus*, is inapplicable to the cure of error. On the one hand, many prayers for moral betterment are open to the objection that they contemplate a breach of causation. Many pray for the forgiveness of sins as for a governmental amnesty, which breaks the line of causation by arresting the operation of law against past offences. On the other hand, it is equally fallacious to conclude that there is no place in the natural order of causation for the forgiveness of sins, or for the prayer for it. The question turns on what is intended by the term

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“forgiveness.” Strictly taken, it is expressive of personal feeling. It signifies the restoration of right feelings and relations between the offender and the offended. It is often extended beyond this to mean the cancelling of certain natural consequences of the offence. But this we often feel that we must not do, even when it is in our power. The best interests of the offender himself, and the interests of others, unite in the demand that he shall abide certain consequences of his act, although restored to favour and goodwill. How then can it be contended that prayer for the divine forgiveness must involve the breach of causation which forgiveness between man and man does not require? All that one can reasonably hold the divine forgiveness as involving is the renewal of the harmony between the individual will and the Universal Will that has been broken by human waywardness.

In using anthropomorphic religious phraseology it behoves us to guard against its illusive tendency; but use it we must—some of it at least—or remain speechless with risk of becoming thoughtless: for it is all we have. When we ask a neighbour’s forgiveness, we ask him to change his mind toward us. But we do not ask God to change; at least, not if we think wisely. Our request to our neighbour implies that we feel toward him as we ought. This is all that our prayer to God can rationally imply. It is complete in its expression of the return of a wayward will to loyalty and obedience. Doubtless, through various misconceptions of God, much more is often added which is either mere verbiage or worse, and thus also

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in need of forgiveness. The divine forgiveness is not to be begged for, but to be accepted ; as the sunlight upon the face is to be had by turning to it. But the desire of it and the acceptance of it demand clear realization in consciousness, and therefore require expression in prayer. The true norm of such expression is not "Have mercy upon us miserable offenders" : it is in the words which Jesus puts into the mouth of the penitent prodigal, "Father, I have sinned."

Here we have to take account of the deprecatory element in such a prayer. Some demand that deprecation shall be eliminated from prayer, as being a relic of that self-mutilation which accompanied primitive devil-worship. One may well object to certain expressions of self-abasement in prayer ; as in Watts's lines :

Great God, how infinite art thou !

What worthless worms are we !

But, on the other hand, in any clear consciousness of an unattained ideal some self-abasement is both a common and an inevitable experience. Object, as we must, to deprecation in the literal sense of the word, as an attempt to avert evil by entreaty, there is at the heart of it a consciousness which must not be extirpated. Perception of the contrast between what we are and what we ought to be inevitably produces that self-abasement, or, if another phrase is required, that sincerely felt humility of the imperfect before the Perfect, which is the condition alike of patient effort for better things, and of prayer as auxiliary thereto.

The objection that prayer for the forgiveness of

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sins involves a breach of the laws of causation, may be valid enough against some popular notions, and some Church teaching, but is of no force against a rational conception of it. This by no means ignores the causative relation in which the prayer for forgiveness stands to the effects of an evil life. Our past deeds are indestructible. Their consequences flow on without break or cut-off. The penitent and reformed transgressor's future can never be quite the same that it would have been, had his past been free from transgression. What, then, is the utmost that can take effect *directly* in and through his prayer for forgiveness? Simply the righting of his voluntary relation to God. This is, of course, a reflex effect; but, like any other effect, it becomes in turn a cause of further effects. These, however indirect, must be counted as effects of his prayer, or of the inward change in him which is both expressed and promoted by his prayer. Without the least breach of causation, a new cause has been added to the causes at work in the past; and this new factor must somehow affect the product. Thus the prayer will be found, after all, to have a certain potency for change in the natural connection of cause and effect. A typical instance is that of St. Paul, whose past vehemence as a persecutor became, on his conversion, a spur to zeal as an apostle. Scientifically expressed, it is a clear case of the persistence of energy with convertibility of force.

It is plain here that while the evil past counts for its full effect, it counts also in another direction. So the muck-heap, which counts for poison and death while it rots above ground, counts for fertility and

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life when put under ground. The debt of consequences due to the past must be paid to the last farthing. But the new-strung will, the aspiration, the hope, which now face that debt, have changed the conditions of dealing with it. Prayer brings these new factors into the problem. Their efficacy in creating, as it were, a sinking-fund for that debt must be credited to the account of prayer. Moreover, such is the interaction of mind and body, that physical as well as moral betterment is often discoverable in the result.

Strange that it has not entered the minds of those who write against the reasonableness of prayer for physical or moral betterment, that there may be more tenable ideas than the old and crude notions against which they direct their polemics. What would such men of science say, if theologians should fancy it worth while to combat the defunct theories of medicine, chemistry and physics, which line the road of scientific progress, as the bones of beasts fringe a caravan route across a desert? Theology, as well as any other science, should be allowed the right to bury its dead.

A point where controversy has generated more heat than light can now be adequately treated. Professor Tyndall's famous test, proposed for a scientific estimate of the effectiveness of prayer, assumed that this is to be proved or disproved according as particular prayers for specific objects are or are not "answered." This is a mistake analogous to that of suspending the question of the divine control of events upon the

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occurrence of miracles in Palestine or elsewhere. It requires no special cases of "answer" to evince the effectiveness of prayer: it is attested by the ethical development of mankind.

The great pioneers of moral progress, the men who have wrought most influentially for the moral enlightenment and reformation of the world, have habitually communed in prayer with the Unseen Power. On this they have depended for the replenishment of their own inner springs of action and endurance. Witness Jesus, following days of active benevolence in the city with nights of prayer on the mountain. The reflex inward effects pass out into the objective effects wrought by these great lives in the world. The changes they brought to pass in the thoughts and actions of mankind must be held as in large measure resultant from their habitual prayer. Then there is the host of martyrs of all kinds, to whose constancy in evil times it was due that desperate struggles for truth and righteousness were crowned with victory. What but the prayerful committal of their cause to him who judges righteously nerved them to brave the fire and the sword? Nor can account be omitted of the multitude of obscure lives, to whose conscientious fidelity in common duties the present order and stability of society are due; who seek in religion the sanctions of morality; who daily look up to God as Father and Judge; and who in doing so find the spur to honest successful effort. This is the true line of sight in which to look for convincing attestation of the objective as well as the subjective efficacy of prayer. Like the divine



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control, to which it is in fact subsidiary, it is not an occasional, but a constant, factor in the unfolding of the order of the living world, and in fulfilling the purposes of God.

Thus far our concern has chiefly been to clear the subject of some fallacies and pseudo-scientific prejudices. It remains now to indicate some points of a mainly constructive line of thought.

Prayer, as Coleridge insisted, is a very different thing from saying prayers. It is an activity of the whole man. Real prayer engrosses and focuses feeling and desire, thought and will, for the direction of the whole self upon its object. Here, undeniably, a real force is apparent, as much as in any movement of our will upon the external world. It is the force of an ethico-spiritual nature, not isolated, but related to nature of the same kind, both seen and unseen. To deem it futile, "a chimæra buzzing in a vacuum," is to escape one difficulty by rushing into a greater—at least for anyone who remembers that action and reaction are inseparable.

The records of the Society for Psychical Research abound in fully verified instances of communications sped from friend to friend, in a moment across hundreds of miles, in some supreme crisis which called into momentary action some previously latent energy of the spirit. Such cases suggest the yet undiscovered possibilities and limits of prayer, considered simply as a mode of psychical force moving upon an unseen psychical environment, through which, as through the physical, divine forces are ever energizing in the

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interplay of action and reaction. That religious enthusiasm dwells closer than our present science or philosophy to the springs of this mysterious force, is thoroughly credible. The saying attributed to Jesus, that, if he chose, he could by prayer summon myriads of spirits to his aid, is not to be thought the idle fantasy of one unique in spiritual insight and energy. Much more reasonable is it to suppose that men in an embryonic stage of moral and spiritual development are as incapable of employing such a force intelligently as are savages of using mathematical instruments.

Viewing prayer as a real force in the complex of world-forces, Dr. F. H. Hedge has well observed that it will tend to overbear or to be overborne, according to its intensity. Many prayers, including all the merely formal, are, by defect of energy, foredoomed to failure; just as many infants die through defect of vitality. Like other forces, prayer will also be most effective in the line of least resistance. The prayer must be weak whose force is that of a mere individual interest, dissociated from, or indifferent if not antagonistic to the general welfare of the world. That prayer is strong which blends with the great tide of aspiration and effort toward divine ends. What John Stuart Mill observed of justice is true of prayer. An interest of personal apart from general welfare is an element of impurity in it, and therefore an element of weakness. The Lord's Prayer significantly conforms to this law of efficiency. How notably is its reference to the personal and transient subordinated to and uplifted by its interest in the universal and eternal! This is characteristic of that effectual



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prayer which the New Testament describes as being in the "name," that is, in the spirit, of Jesus. There is, of course, an organic relation of human needs to divine ends which cannot always be consciously realized, even in prayer. On psychical principles it would be least realized in the automatic uprightness of the faithful life, which is, as Origen said, the practical utterance of the Lord's Prayer.

The question which some still think it worth while to ask, "Why does a loving God, who knows our needs, require us to petition for their supply?" both reveals the fundamental misconception, and brings into contrast the fundamental truth in regard to the whole subject. Dr. Edward Caird has noted, as a strange survival of the pagan mode of thought among Christians, that some of them still conceive of prayer as an attempt to get God to do man's will, rather than as an aspiration to get God's Will done by men. Jesus has expressly cautioned us not to think that either he prays or we pray for the purpose of informing God about our needs or inducing him to supply them. What end, then, is served by petitionary prayer for the things that God knows we need, and that he wills to bestow? Surely no thinker is unaware that verbal expression has much to do with both clearness of thought and the concentration of attention and will. It is reason enough for engaging in petitionary prayer, that the confession of our wants in words to God enables and pledges us in a clearer consciousness to work out more reverently and patiently the divine conditions of their supply.

Thus it is that through prayer the individual will

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strives toward unity with the Universal Will. To impute to the leaders of religious thought to-day the crude, primitive fancy of bending the divine Will into line with the human is unworthy of any who profess to keep abreast of the world's advancing intelligence. The true function of prayer is to lift the will of man into line with the Will of God. This it does by its effect in clarifying moral insight, deepening reverent convictions of responsibility, and dedicating self more thoroughly to divine ends, which can be accomplished in the world no sooner or more fully than men devote themselves to their fulfilment.

“God, or atoms!” This is the alternative which is ultimately forced upon us by the question whether to pray or not to pray. From intellectual perplexity there is no complete escape, whichever solution of the mystery of life we elect. To the moral certainty which the problem yields, one of the greatest names in contemporary science has just left us his posthumous testimony that there is “a vacuum in the soul of man which nothing can fill but faith in God.”<sup>1</sup> Of this faith the vital breath is prayer.

<sup>1</sup> G. J. Romanes, “Thoughts on Religion,” p. 162.

# The Immanent Answerer of Prayer



### XIII

## THE IMMANENT ANSWERER OF PRAYER<sup>1</sup>

Speak thou to him, for he hears, and spirit with spirit can meet ;  
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet.

THUS Tennyson wrote years ago with profound conviction of the immanence of God in man. But the significance of this truth for proper conceptions of prayer is not yet appreciated. The traditional and common language of prayer, and consequently the common thought about prayer, is dominated by the naturally earlier thought of the divine transcendence, and this also is imperfectly conceived as merely outward—above or beyond our bounds. “Let our prayers come up to thee” ; “Look down upon us” ; “Send down upon us thy Holy Spirit” ; such phrases constantly recur in liturgies, and our hymnals abound in similar expressions. At the antipodes of Tennyson’s lines are Watts’s :

Come, dearest Lord, descend and dwell  
By faith and love in every breast.

Even the opening words of the Lord’s Prayer, drawn from the Old Testament, may suggest the idea, which Jesus certainly did not entertain, of a space to be bridged by prayer. Hardly any religious language

<sup>1</sup> From *The Homiletic Review*, July, 1909.

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attests more strikingly than the current phrases in which this idea is expressed how poorly the majority of Christian people have appropriated that cardinal thought of the New Testament concerning God—"in him we live, and move, and have our being."

From this imperfect conception of the Hearer of prayer some vexing doubts of the answering of prayer draw nourishment. Even the thought of his nearness in omnipresence leaves room for such doubts so long as thought draws any line which externalizes him in complete apartness from us. The thought of God as within us, and in the very centre of our being as really as in heaven, supplies a missing element in our rationale of prayer, and to that extent makes the answering of prayer more intelligible and rational to the doubting questioner. It is a fundamental truth, into clear conviction of which all who pray need to school themselves out of the inveterate habit of positing God anywhere, in any outsideness or any apartness from themselves. St. Paul said: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." We must understand that God is the immanent as well as the transcendent Answerer of prayer—transcendent in the Pauline sense of inexhaustible grace, "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, *according to the power that worketh in us*"—and is to be prayed to as such. "He that cometh to God must believe *that* he is," and is to be prayed to as *what* he is.

It is often questioned whether prayer, however efficacious it be thought, owes its efficacy to any really divine response. However real the effect, it is

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alleged to result merely from a sort of self-magnetizing process, with which God has nothing to do except in having made us capable of it. To this misconception the truth of God's immanence, involving his immediate activity, supplies correction.

That he who is enthroned in the universe is also enshrined in the soul would seem sufficiently evinced to reason by the upspringing of his thought in the thought of man, as when Kepler in his astronomic enthusiasm cried, "O God, I think thy thoughts after thee." The highest reach of philosophy in ancient Greece had anticipated him in its conception of the universal Reason, one and the same in deity and in humanity. The modern agnostic agrees to this, telling us, with Spencer, that the infinite and eternal energy whence all things proceed wells up within us in the form of self-consciousness. These thinkers bear witness to the Scriptures which declare that the divine law is written in man's heart, that God is himself that law, saying, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy," and that in him we live. But men are commonly unconscious of this central truth of their being, nor is the cause obscure. Environed by visible things and persons engrossing all attention, each of us dwells, as it were, in a walled city, around which lies a rich country out of sight from its streets. The conditions of daily life thus form a barrier between an actual consciousness of the world and a potential consciousness of God. But the walled city has gates for outlet into the surrounding country and inlet for supplies therefrom. Likewise removable is the barrier between our consciousness of the visible environment

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and recognition of the all-environing and all-sustaining life in which we live.

To remove this barrier is the function of prayer, comprehensively defined as communion with God. Through the prayer-gate God is admitted into active participation in the thoughts from which action springs. So far as admitted to our thought he cannot but be active in our thought. For he is not a passive presence, but an active power. Not for any miraculous effacement of human limitations, or to obliterate differences between large intelligence and small, degrees of receptivity, and other conditioning elements of the case ; but, in whatever case, imparting calmness to feeling, clearness to moral vision, rightness to purpose, strength to will—all evidently contributory to the efficacy of the effort put forth in prayer. This is that gift of the Holy Spirit which, said Jesus, "your heavenly Father shall give to them that ask him." This is not theory, it is real experience. Would it not be an aid to such experience if we should oftener say, when by ourselves, "Our Father, who art in heaven, who art *in me*" ?

The same considerations apply, but with a marked difference, to our prayers for others. God is immanent in them as in us. In them, as in us, is the same barrier of the worldly environment, engrossing consciousness with transient interests, and walling out from it the Being ensphering all. They, as we, need lowering or removal of this barrier for his admission as an active factor in their thoughts. Admitted, he will enter not from afar or above, but from within



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them. In so thinking it is not forgotten that Jesus bade his Apostles to wait, ere beginning their mission, until "endued with power from on high." The significance of this, however, is not in the aboveness of the transcendent Spirit, but in the transcendency of the immanent Spirit, of whom Jesus had affirmed, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The power within is inexhaustible because one with the power above. The power at the human point of contact is identical with power in infinite plenitude on high.

What now can the prayer of any but themselves effect for them? To give God entrance to their minds is their affair, yet not so exclusively theirs as to discourage co-operation with them to that end. Prayer—not saying prayers, but energetic praying—is one of the influences which one can exert for this upon another. This fact was anciently a matter of faith; recently it has become matter of experience. That mind often influences mind without the transmission of any sign, that there is such a thing as thought-transference without word or sound or look, and this though miles intervene, is affirmed by psychologists of the highest rank, as William James and others. Henry Sidgwick, that pre-eminently cautious critic, eminent both as a psychologist and as a founder of the British Society for Psychical Research, once said to the present writer, "Telepathy is scientifically as well attested as gravitation." With this mysterious faculty men are differently endowed, as with other powers, mathematical, musical, etc.; but it exists, and in its exercise, however unconscious of the fact

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one be, there is an efficacy of prayer for others—whatever other efficacy may be—an efficacy toward God not distant in heaven but present in the man prayed for, in whom God is waiting for the mind to admit him across the threshold of consciousness. Such prayer directs its thought of God energetically toward the friend in whom it would awaken the same thought. What prayer for one's self effects, in the measure of its energy, prayer for another self in the same measure *tends* to effect—removal of the barrier that walls God out of recognition in consciousness for his inlet to activity therein. Among the conditions of this effect, partly in the one mind, partly in the other, the fixed and constant one is the energy of desire and will put forth in the prayer.

Long before modern psychology had helped thus far toward an understanding of the fact, the fact was recognized. "Very forceful is a righteous man's prayer in its energizing," wrote St. James. That eminent Unitarian divine, sometime Professor at Harvard, Dr. F. A. Hedge, thus wrote fifty years ago : "Every genuine prayer is a positive force in the universe of things. . . . The motion may not reach to the outward visible result which the prayer contemplates. . . . But every prayer, in proportion to the force that is in it, tends to that result."<sup>1</sup> The only forceful prayer is the prayer of the earnest will in which *the whole man* strives toward his aim in purposed unity with the will of God.

Here now we discover the rationale of the strong

<sup>1</sup> "Reason and Religion," p. 105, 1865.

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emphasis which the New Testament puts on praying together "with one accord" in concerted co-operative effort. In prayer, as in every other species of activity, union is strength, even when only two, as Jesus said, join forces in prayer. Just as many are deficient in more common faculties, as imagination, verbal memory, etc., many are deficient in sensitiveness to telepathic influence by other minds, and many are deficient in power to exert it. Resistance, on the one hand, weakness on the other, constitute convincing reason for that focusing of many wills in united prayer to which St. Paul often exhorted the Churches in his time of arduous struggle with a hostile world. When modern Christianity draws on this now largely unused power of co-operative prayer, as modern industry is beginning to draw on the electric power available in the waterfall composed of countless raindrops, a new era of triumphant progress will dawn on the Church of God.

The transcendence of God is pressed upon us continually by our very senses in constant contact with the universe. The immanence of God is revealed to us in the hour of religious reflection, and the great struggle of religion is to realize it in practical appropriation of its inspirational power. For ages it was kept before the world by a few mystics, prophets of the wider appreciation it now is gaining. It still waits for adequate recognition by the Church as the central fact in man, the grand corrective of many errors in thought, and many inhumanities in conduct. The present essay aims merely to promote thoughtful

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inquiry into the modification it brings to the usual conception of prayer, and the confirmation it adds to ancient faith in the answering God. "God," said William Law, anticipating Tennyson by a century and a half, "the only good of all intelligent natures, is . . . more present to and in our souls than our own bodies." Common consciousness does not admit this, but will have to be schooled into the truth of it, as common-sense had to be schooled into the non-apparent truth it once denied, that the earth revolves around the sun.

For this no small responsibility rests on every religious teacher, especially in the pulpit. At the root of religious life is *the idea of God*. Study not only of the words of God in sacred books, but also of the works of God in his universe, especially in the starry heavens which declare his glory to the psalmist, must enrich our thought of him for the spiritualizing of earthly minds. The wonders of modern astronomy as now popularized can do more for this than most Christian people are aware.

The undevout astronomer is mad.

Nothing so much needs culture in the modern Church as the idea of God, and of our life as lived "*in him*." With this the public prayer has more constantly to do than the sermon. God finds us everywhere, but we find him nowhere if not within ourselves in prayer. A pastor, widely known some fifty years ago, said he had often prayed God to forgive him many of his public prayers. The prayer needs forgiveness which, in setting God afar on his heavenly throne, fails to

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recognize his throne in the presence-chamber of filial spirits.

Since the Oxford Movement began, nearly eighty years ago, much has been done both in the liturgical and the non-liturgical Churches for "the enrichment of worship." Much remains to be done, not outwardly so much as inwardly through the enrichment of our idea of God. Our forms of prayer now current, whether printed or unprinted, need the transfiguration wrought by the consciousness of meeting the Immanent Answerer of prayer, "spirit to spirit," in his temple within the praying soul.



# The Ascent of Life





## XIV

### THE ASCENT OF LIFE

WHO of us fully conceives the large meaning of the short and common word that stands for the mysterious reality termed *life*? A common word, it includes all that lives, from grass to God. *Life*—it is in the moss that clothes the rock, in the mind that deciphers the story of the rock, in the spirit that communes with the Spirit of the universe, and is conscious of sonship to the uncreated Life that pervades the spheres and the ages, and transcends them all. In presence of life, however lowly its form, even “the flower in the crannied wall,” we face the ultimate and inscrutable Reality of the universe. In each of us is this Reality, most hidden, most manifest; nay, in however meagre or various measure, we are *it*.

Many have wondered how life ever began to be in this world of ours, which at different times has been a shining cloud and a white-hot globe. Life was never introduced into things; it was rather the introducer of things; it was always here; not, indeed, at first in organized forms, as now, but as an organizing power, even in things we call “inanimate”—a word that simply means lacking breath. In what is called “dead matter” is discovered that primary sign of life which motion makes in anything

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thought to be lifeless because seeming to be motionless. A pebble seems to be a lifeless thing. But scientific research resolves it into immaterial elements—"ions" or "electrons"—points of electric energy perpetually vibrating and gyrating. This, to be sure, is a very rudimentary sign, a sign, nevertheless, that life is astir where we thought it absent; was present in the primitive nebula, preparing to bring forth in successive ages its myriad births of organized forms from the least unto the greatest. "Consciousness," says the Bishop of Tasmania, "sleeps in stones, stirs in plants, awakes in animals, and knows that it is awake in self-conscious, purposeful man." The same thought flows with religious warmth in verse :

We bless thee for the life that flows  
A pulse in every grain of sand,  
A beauty in the blooming rose,  
A thought and deed in brain and hand.

When life is at length first recognized in growing things, it is not life beginning but life entering a new stage of activity. When plant life first sprouted, whether on the sea bottom or on the sea beach that first rose above the watery waste, there was first manifested in this world the real supernatural—a higher order of nature, endowed with the power of growth, the product of life in a higher degree, life more abundant. Then, when life had begun to clothe the bare bosom of earth with its green mantle, there appeared in the blind groping of roots towards the water, and the unconscious turning of leaves toward the light, a dim presage of life still more abundant yet to be.

By-and-by this presage began to become fact.

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Life ascends to its next higher stage. To motion and growth is now superadded the sensitive intelligence in which pleasure and its inseparable shadow, pain, combine to guide the animal to welfare—to build its nest, to rear its young, to hunt its food, to defend itself from foes. Here also, in the animal world which life brings to birth after the plant world has provided its store of food, appears a nature supernatural to all preexistent nature—the nature of the bee, the bird, the bullock, in contrast with the nature of the plant or of the sand—the higher product of the more abundant life. And here again appears a presage of the further advance of life. The social ants, the social bees, the horned herds that associate for their common defence from beasts of prey, point forward to still more fruitful associations of beings more intelligent for the common service and the common good.

Ages pass, and the unconscious prophecy of lower natures again finds fulfilment when man appears. In humanity life ascends to a higher stage, conscious of itself as sensitive and intelligent. All preceding life was subject to nature, helplessly exposed to calamitous change. Witness the extinct mammoths found entombed in Siberian and Alaskan ice. Human life alone has been able to dominate nature, and to thrive where the world is hardest. Slowly at first inventing implements and arts, man at last makes his supreme device of written speech, whereby the experience of each generation is stored for all that come after. Now the upward movement changes from slow and arduous to rapid and facile. During

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the few years of infancy and childhood the progeny of an educated race runs up the long ascent from savagery to civilization. Once isolated, now men commune in the records of thought with men of many lands and distant times ; find and feel fellowship with the heroes, sages and poets of every age, and the spirit of a universal brotherhood awakes. All past generations now, as Carlyle said, work with the modern man. In this time-long, world-wide kinship of mind with mind he lives a life more abundant, supernatural to the embryonic and sub-human life before it. To the mere savage the civilized explorer who discovers him is a god.

Life still more abundant is waiting the fulness of time for its coming forth. Nor have prophetic glimpses of it been lacking while human life in its rawness was narrowed to its need of subduing the earth to supply its primary necessities. Before the dawn of written history we discover hints of a dim feeling that human life connects with something beyond the surroundings that supply its daily food and shelter. What mean those relics of funeral feasts beside the burial-places of the dead on the edge of the prehistoric glaciers—those implements of husbandry and war found with skeletons in prehistoric graves ? In this dim idea of life continuing hereafter, which even in its savage stage marks the great ascent of human life above the life of beasts, is seen the grey dawn of a still higher fellowship than that of the cultured reader with ancient worthies. Seers and prophets of this higher life arise in various lands and tongues. Raw pupils of the All-Father endeavour to interpret as best they

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can the suggestions of his immanent Spirit to their souls.

Shy yearnings of the savage,  
Unfolding thought by thought,  
To holy lives are lifted,  
To visions fair are wrought.

Saints and sages shine here and there in many nations. Among the many one appears preeminently gifted with the religious genius whose passion is to find the righteous Father of men, and in walking humbly with him to realize the life abundant which is life indeed.

This goal at length is reached. The God-seeking Hebrew stock bears the consummate flower of humanity—one who attains, as none before him, to the unclouded vision of God, and consciously, as has none other, dwells in the bosom of the Eternal in whom all live. In Jesus the final stage is reached in the time-long ascent of life from the lowest to the highest—from motion to growth, from growth to sensitive intelligence, from this to self-consciousness, from this to God-consciousness. Well does St. Paul call him as the type of the ultimate spiritual man, “the last Adam,” as the first Adam was the type of the primary physical man: “the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit.” The centuries since the three years’ ministry of that wondrous life,

. . . the sinless years  
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue,

the regenerations, the transformations, which he wrought, continuing to this day in spreading streams

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wherever he is hearkened to, exhibit the most dynamic uplift ever given to our humanity. These reaffirm the Gospel record, "In him was life"—life abounding, supernatural and superhuman to the life that is absorbed in subduing and enjoying the world of the senses. Sober history, reasoning back from effect to cause, reaffirms his recorded saying: "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly."

But not only in quality, in power also is the fulness of life manifested in the spiritual man, of whom Jesus is the ideal type. It is only he, whose will in its oneness with the Eternal Will is free of every fetter; it is only he, who achieves dominion over the lower elements of his being. This the mere man of the world, self-conscious, not God-conscious, never attains. He subdues the world of the senses and the sciences, defies its hostile climates, eradicates its plagues, harnesses its Niagaras to his mill-wheels, tames its lightnings to become his messengers. But the intelligence that achieves all this proves powerless to subdue the inner world of the will, its insurgent desires and passions. These are the destroyers of empires, the wreckers of civilizations. These foes of the spirit—the selfishness, the lusts, the ambitions, the hatreds—that corrupt and disrupt the moral and the social life of men, are mastered only by the higher potency of the life whose God-conscious quality we term spiritual—potent in its conscious fellowship with the eternal Spirit, masterful in its conviction of the lesser worth of the perishable things that men lust and fight for. For the spiritual life alone the loss

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or cross that threatens it is bereft of terror by its assurance of the eternal world it beholds as its own. With a psalm of triumph over the last enemy it enters the fire of martyrdom in the certainty of rising through it to the victor's crown. Thus the evil of the world, whose vanquishment began with the dawn of human intelligence, is put completely under foot only by the spiritual man in the power of life abundant for the most exigent demand. The symbol of this perfect victory is that historic Cross, through whose inspiring appeal and leadership the conquest of the selfish heart is effected, its wolfish passions suppressed, its stormy will bridled, its savage tempers tamed, and the animal man is progressively humanised into the moral likeness of his Father, God.

Two great and common errors receive correction from this survey of the ascent of life, especially of human life, from the physical to the spiritual.

(1) A large part of the religious world errs in supposing that the life abundant which Jesus offers to impart is life hereafter, a future blessedness in heaven. But no such future could ensue except as the fruit of a present corresponding to it. The seed and the harvest must be identical in kind; and no harvest apart from the seed. What Jesus is intent on is the all-important thing, the seed. What he presents and calls us to adopt is the life of the spirit here and now. What is seen of it in this world is the sole but sufficient presage of its diviner unfolding in a future world. Apart from what there is of it here, what ground of hope for any of it there?



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(2) The irreligious world errs in thinking the life of the spirit in imitation of Christ, while agreeable to those that like it, to be something that a man can do without. Can do, indeed! A man can do without education, without robust health; can do, in some sort, as a cripple or a dwarf, but not as a man full powered, not in tests of capacity or endurance. So he can do—somehow and for a while—who neglects to feed his religious nature and starves his spiritual powers. He is content to dwarf himself in the very faculties that distinguish human life from brute life, and to be but semi-human, a half-man, as compared with the divine standard of normal humanity.

Serious is the conclusion pointed to by our survey of the ascent of life. What we have seen of the progressive rounding out of life in our world through phase after phase of increasing fulness, from the thin crescent of the physical to the full-orbed splendour of the spiritual, as seen in Jesus, puts an inevitable and momentous question: At what stage in this series are *we* found? With what grade of life are we, or should we, be content? This view of life as a many-storied house puts to each who thinks upon it the question, whether it is rational to shut one's self into its lower rooms. Must not one who cares for normal and complete humanity live also in its upper rooms, where there is vision of the sunrise and the sunset beyond the walled-in streets, and an outlook into the breadth of star-lit skies? Should not a man be alive at the top as well as at the base of his being—*alive*, sensitively and consciously, to the God in whom all lives are ensphered, as well as to the passing show



## The Ascent of Life

of things that glitter and are gone? Many of us must confess :

'Tis life of which our nerves are scant ;  
More life and fuller that I want.

Life that is unresponsive, insensitive to him in whom all lives are lived is life truncated, cut off at the top.

It is this half-human life that Jesus would quicken into its normal fulness by his appeal to men as children of his heavenly Father. What we instinctively feel in presence of any man of noble type we feel in the highest degree before him—the silent but eloquent appeal which a superior life always makes to an inferior, to aspire, to imitate, to ascend. We discern the divineness of the goal he points to—an abiding and joyous consciousness of the Father who upbears our mortal struggle in his everlasting arms. We hear his encouraging call: *Believe in me ; Follow me ; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.* But let us not fail to hear this call as appealing to much more than the mere instinct of imitation. It is pointed with a stimulus keener than our natural impulse to copy the best that is in sight. He who freely spends his best to impart his best adds to the spur of imitation the spur of gratitude and loyal affection. The historic Cross reminds us of what it cost Jesus to reveal to men the life abundant into whose fulness he would lift them. No cloistral life is this, as many fancy ; no recluse meditation on another world, declining the activities of this. Rather is it the only full-powered life, complete in its contact with real interests, with hand on the plough, yet as open-eyed to the sun as to the furrow, both in touch with

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the earthly and in consciousness of the heavenly, unifying all human interests in its fidelity both to the Fatherhood and to the brotherhood that includes them all. And this is the only undecaying life, the only life prophetic of a further ascent in the unfolding of its spiritual powers beyond the bourne of flesh and blood.

It concerns us, finally, to mark the fateful consequence attending Jesus' call to the full-rounded, full-powered life of the spiritual man whom God would create, and is thus creating. It separates men into two classes, with a fateful difference between them. This difference is in kind the same that we see between the civilized man and the barbarian. The barbarian sees the civilized man hard at work, early and late, and he sees nothing attractive in that. He sees the colonist wearing clothes, but he wants nothing more than loin-cloth and beads. He wonders what good the colonist gets by looking at white paper with black marks on it an hour at a time. The colonist offers to teach him to read, but he declines it as deadly dull. He prefers his wild, hand-to-mouth life. "It costs too much to be a white man," said one such barbarian. Precisely this is the attitude of the irreligious man of the world toward Jesus' call to the high level of spiritual and godlike manhood. "It costs too much." This is simply spiritual and moral barbarism. And it is this barbarian content with life deficient in preference to life abundant, that is the sin and the shame of the irreligious man. "Light is come into the world," said Jesus, "and men love the darkness

## The Ascent of Life

rather; and this is the condemnation." The most grievously felt condemnation is that which one is compelled to pronounce upon himself. It must sometime strike through every soul that sins against itself in declining the effort by which the divine upland of life is ascended. Nature cannot be wronged with impunity. To starve one's religious nature, to deaden the spirit toward God, is to atrophy what is both most human and most divine in man. It is not possible that this defeat of life can fail to be ultimately felt with regret for the irreparable.

"What is *your* life?" This question of Christ's Apostle is the fundamental question to be pondered by every living man. If conscience must confess that it is not yet the life that God's holy Christ came to quicken, not yet the abounding life of the spirit that we might realize if we cared for it, and that we are still living in the basement, or at the highest, on the middle floors of our being, with its upper rooms unfurnished and shut, there is but one way of escape from that arrest of development which ends in life's disappointment and defeat. It is the way alike of rational sanity, of moral soundness, and of life ascending, to face the light, and to follow whither it leads.



## Dynamic Immortality



## XV

### DYNAMIC IMMORTALITY <sup>1</sup>

AT East Northfield, Massachusetts, over the grave of the great evangelist, there is an inscription fraught with the one invincible assurance of immortality : "*He that doeth the Will of God abideth forever.*" In these words the cumulating evidences of the great fact culminate. It is the proof of proofs. Because the doing of the Will of God must go on, the doer of it must go on in its doing. The Hebrew sage glimpsed this certainty when he wrote :

In the way of righteousness is life,  
And in the pathway thereof is no death.

The Will of God is the terse Biblical term for the Infinite and Eternal Energy of Love and Truth and Righteousness. In the saint we see this individualized in a distinct personality, whose centre of consciousness is his constant will to work with the divine Will. It is only as individualized in the wills of personal agents that the Will of God carries forward his work in the evolution of moral and spiritual life in the world.

In view of the personal agents whom we see doing the Will of God, the question arises whether their

<sup>1</sup>From *The Outlook*, July 20, 1907.

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activity is transient or permanent. We see certain forms of the Infinite Energy which are transient, and lose themselves by convertibility into other forms, while the sum of energy remains incapable of diminution. Motion perishes as motion, and reappears as heat. Heat, perishing as heat, is converted into motion. But from these changeful physical forces the moral forces stand apart and above in the nature of things as unchangeable. Love, truth, righteousness are unchangeable. What they are they are forever. We see them as divine energies incarnated in good men. Only as individualized in good men does their divine energy become an effective working force for the furtherance of goodness in the world.

What, then, would result did the saint cease to exist when his body dies? The divine energy of love and truth and righteousness incarnated in him would be withdrawn from potency into latency, its totality irreducible, but its efficiency reduced; an activity would be subtracted from the effective working forces of the moral universe. The impossibility of this is what the word *immortality* signifies. It is impossible in rational thought that the climax of the saint's earthly development of insight, power, and serviceableness in the furtherance of the Will of God should be stoppage of that furtherance in his extinction. The saint needs not to demonstrate that he will survive his mortal hour. The sceptic has to demonstrate the contrary, if he can.

A good man dies, and all say that the visible world has lost thereby. The sum of its effective forces for the increase of goodness has been lessened. But



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has the universe lost anything when the saint no longer walks the earth? Did any fraction of its mobilized force for the working out of the Will of God become non-existent, or even latent and in-operative, when Nero's sword fell upon the neck of Paul? Was it an extinction of Paul's activity, or only a transference beyond the horizon of the senses, that then took place? To ask the question is to suggest the only rational reply. Only if the Will of God could be thought of as in a measure ceasing to work for love and truth and righteousness, could the good man through whom it works be thought of as ceasing to exist. As often as we see a noble career of ripely purified and disciplined power for goodness reaching the inevitable limit of activity on earth, this conviction deepens. Only "the fool," who "says there is no God," can say,

The forces that *were* Christ  
Have taken new forms and fled.

The river which disappears into a mountain cave flows on elsewhere.

Reasonings on immortality are often faulted because immortality is misconceived. It is not mere continuity of existence in personal consciousness that is in question, but rather the conservation of moral energy, of *active* values—values of universal as well as of individual worth—efficient factors of the eternal work of God, the cancelling of which would be in some measure an abridgment of that work, and a loss of power to the moral universe. This was instinctively felt by the primitive Christian consciousness, as

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expressed in Peter's saying that the spirit of Jesus, released from Calvary, continued his redeeming work by going to preach to "the spirits in prison."

One who has substituted this dynamic conception of immortality for the static notion of an everlasting rest, which deserves the scepticism it encounters, does not aspire to future existence, however blissful, but to future activity. The hymn-writer's hope to be

Where congregations ne'er break up,  
And Sabbaths have no end,

does not interest him. He looks for what is far better than

The shout of them that triumph,  
The song of them that feast.

There is a mood of Christian thought that takes the hedonistic view of the future life which in a higher mood it deems immoral to take of the present. No such future can content a spirit which has imbibed Jesus' lesson that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and is striving to live the Christly life of unselfish service to neighbours. Such a one would not have this supreme blessedness of imparting blessing to others terminated at the grave. The joyousness of enlarged activity in such doing of the Father's Will with freer and fuller power is what gives all worth to the immortality which they who have the mind of Christ aspire to. The glory to which the saint looks forward is simply "the glory of going on" in the doing of the Will of God.

It is an axiom of physics that a moving body will continue moving till stopped by some opposing force. Friction and gravitation quickly arrest the flight of

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the cannon-shot, but the planet flies for ages of ages through the frictionless ether. The spiritual world, no less than the physical, has its axiomatic law of motion. We see the conscious doing of God's Will in active progress. There is nothing in the nature of things to arrest it, for, as Augustine said, "God's Will is the nature of things." It must simply go on, the doing, and so the doer. It is this axiom of spiritual progress which Christian faith asserts in the apostolic formula, "*He that doeth the Will of God continueth forever.*"



# The Terrestrial World to Come



## XVI

### THE TERRESTRIAL WORLD TO COME

THE opposite of what most readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the common version understand by "the world to come"<sup>1</sup> is what it meant to the writer. It expresses a thought which the modern mind has lost—"the inhabited earth that is to be." This, as the closing chapters of the Apocalypse show, was the dominant thought of the Church during the first century. Looking for the speedy reappearance of Christ in visible glory to overwhelm all hostile power, they expected to see the inhabited earth made new by that stupendous miracle. This hope, inspired by oracles like that quoted by St. Jude<sup>2</sup> from the apocryphal book of Enoch, coloured and dominated their understanding of Jesus' promised return to earth in glory. Yet by this he must have meant spiritual, not spectacular glory, just the same sort of return, not in form but in spirit, which he taught them had already fulfilled the prophet Malachi's prediction that Elijah should return by the return of the Elijah spirit of reform in the advent of John the Baptist.

Time soon exposed the fallacy of their expectations.

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews ii. 5, R.V. *margin* ; see also vi. 5, R.V.

<sup>2</sup> Jude 14, 15.

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So, when the illusory hope of Jesus' bodily return faded away, there came in its place what still exists—a transfer of expectation from the earthly world to the heavenly. This in its turn now needs correction, at least in the exclusiveness of its interest in other-worldly mansions of heavenly joy.

Our immortal hope, indeed, is incomparably precious. But it was given to brace and hearten faithfulness in present trial, struggle, and sacrifice with optimistic conviction and soldierly spirit. Those pessimistic hymns, still used in Christian assemblies, which style this world a "wilderness," a "vale of tears," and our life a "pilgrimage" through it to "a land of delight" beyond the Jordan stream of death, should long since have been discarded. In such comparisons the present world is wronged; its present interests suffer, as well as those of the coming generations, when they who are called to a holy warfare as soldiers of the Cross conceive of themselves rather as wayfarers and sojourners.

Our forefathers delighted in a book written by good Richard Baxter two centuries ago, and treasured in the home of my childhood, "The Saint's Everlasting Rest." The thought of this moved good Dr. Watts to write a stanza still dear to some hymn-book editors, but not to a virile Christian spirit facing the world's distressful evils and needs:

My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this,  
And sit and sing herself away  
To everlasting bliss.

¶ To sit and sing of everlasting bliss took the place of the Church's proper business of bringing in the Kingdom



## The Terrestrial World to Come

of God. The result of this exaggerated other-worldliness and its false emphasis is that the present world is not getting its dues. Where Jesus left his infant Church facing a world dominated by the Antichrist of selfishness, a large part of the modern Church still halts, poorer than even that infant in the spirit by which Jesus intended to transform the world to come in coming centuries—the spirit of brotherly service to fellow men. Instead of this we see so-called Christian nations arming themselves to the teeth against each other, even preparing for battle in the air, as well as on land and sea, and tense with internal strife between social classes because of social injustice and misery. And still the missionary service by which Jesus enjoined his friends to make all people his disciples interests but a small part of his Church, and in common experience benevolent enterprises are chronically short both of men and of money.

Such have been the evil consequences of losing the New Testament thought of the world to come, the primitive Christian interest in the inhabited earth that is to be. For truly Christian living that lost thought, that forgotten interest must be reinstated. Where we emphasize the idea of an unearthly heaven the Scriptures emphasize the idea of a heavenly earth, full of the light of the knowledge of God. Jesus, indeed, expanded the few glimpses given in the Old Testament of life beyond the grave—but with what great reserve!—only to testify that good or evil there depends on the good or evil direction of life here. The logic of such reserve is plain : one world at a time ; use this world rightly.

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Adventists, indeed, may cry that the end of the world is near, quoting the Bible as they misunderstand and abuse it. Such fictions our scholars and scientists have exploded, at least for educated people. Church choirs still sing, perhaps only for the music accompanying the words :

O Paradise, O Paradise !  
The world is growing old.

But geology, says Professor Shaler, of Harvard, permits us to believe that the earth will continue habitable for a hundred million years. And Tennyson turns this insight into song that

Man as yet is being made,  
and that

We are far from the noon of man, there is room for the race to grow.

Here we are returning to the line of the Scriptural forecasts of the inhabited earth of the future, in whose closing vision perfected humanity is pictured as an ideal society, a holy and a glorious city on a renovated earth, irradiated by God himself.

But is this too remote a vision to appeal to present interest and effort ? In view of the intervening ages that must elapse, and unknown changes that must occur, let it not be forgotten that all the past ages have contributed to make this world of ours what it is. In a universe whose every part is related to every other our momentary day is somehow influential on the days most distant of the world to come. A telescopic view of these is shut to eyes that are focused to a short range within the span of individual memory

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and foresight. But prophetic science does not leave us wholly in the dark concerning things to be. The light of experience also, gathered from cycle after cycle of history, enables us to conjecture reasonably of experience in future successions of cause and effect. These foregleams, however dim and spectral, of a world to be realized on earth after we shall have passed on beyond appeal touchingly to those who are aware that it is only through struggle and suffering that our world has become what it is, and to those especially who now are investing toil and hope in effort to bring forth a world still better. These know that hope must learn to labour and to wait while time is slowly ripening harvests. They know that while the vision tarries, no effort toward it can be wholly frustrate. "God buries his workmen, but carries on his work."

The fallen empires of the past, the civilizations that have been wrecked, all lived by the sword, and so died by the sword. In our day a new type of civilization and of empire has been born, best expressing itself in the American Union, with the olive-branch for its symbol, and striving to bind the discordant nations into a partnership of mutual benefit, though still moved by its fears of *Weltpolitik* to continue building battleships. The pacific influences now leavening our world—commercial, industrial, educational, philanthropic, moral, religious—inspire a valid conviction that civilization, amid all the surviving barbarisms which still disfigure it, has at length secured a stable base. On this we may well believe that its essential task, the humanizing of mankind, is to advance the

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coming generations, however slowly, yet surely,  
toward

the crowning race,  
No longer half akin to brute.

Thus history exhibits the growing ascendancy of Christian principles and practices, and confirms the apostolic faith that Jesus is to sway the world to come on the inhabited earth.

Yet this vision is like that of distant mountains, whose azure peaks tell the traveller nothing of the cañons or the arid plains which intervene. It may be that successive ploughings-in and replantings must precede the final ripening of humanity in its last great harvest-field. It may be that in field after field successive devastations will spare but a remnant of choice seed to continue the evolution of man into "the image of God," until the divine work of spiritual creation is complete.

Looking backward but a thousandth part of the period which the geologist assigns to a habitable earth, we see primeval men overtaken by the rigours of a glacial period whose mammoth victims are found entombed in Alaskan ice, and whose southern margin is marked by the long island of gravel that stretches eastward from New York. Looking forward, the Astronomer-Royal predicts that another such icy shroud will enwrap the present northern abodes of civilization. Cataclysms drowning wide areas of the prehistoric human world are commemorated from Mesopotamia to Mexico in traditions of a deluge, and in the Egyptian legend of a mighty island kingdom overwhelmed beneath the Atlantic. That the earth's

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crust is still unstable its slow subsidences and upheavals now going on would not permit us to forget, even if danger-signals were not given by the earthquake. When a physicist puts among possibilities even a complete *bouleversement* of the continents and oceans, massing in our northern hemisphere the waters now massed in the southern, we cannot say that even so tremendous a catastrophe would be incongruous with the history of our globe. All that we may be confident of is that it will never lack some habitable regions beyond the ruin; the dove let loose from the ark will find a place to nest in. Some fugitives from even a general wreck will find a field where to replant a new earth with the seed that shall again overspread it. The astronomer Lowell, who has longest and from the most advantageous positions studied our neighbouring planet Mars, tells us that it is a world already in its old age. What he views as stupendous works of irrigation, that channel it for water drawn from the last source of supply left in its melting polar snows, suggests to us that the struggle for existence, so arduous in our world, is a cosmic law of life.

What the Apostle to the Hebrews wrote of all past generations, "They apart from us cannot be made perfect"—cannot reach the goal of the ages of faith—we in turn may say of all unborn generations. That ancient lesson of the unity of the earliest and the latest of mankind, co-operant in continuous endeavour toward the

one far-off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves,

reinspires with conviction of abiding value and

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efficiency our instinctive feeling of insignificance. Our brief individual life often seems reduced to nothingness. What is it but a mere atom in the tremendous mass of generations innumerable covering millions of years ?

We pass ; the path that each man trod  
Is dim, or will be dim with weeds ;  
What fame is left for human deeds  
In endless age ? It rests with God.

Ere the hundredth part of the history of the world to come on earth shall have recorded its story of catastrophe and restoration, we of this century shall seem to men then living as near the cradle of humanity as the men of the primeval ages seem to us. And not unreasonably so. It is not yet a half-century since men and women were bought and sold as cattle in this Republic. And what inhumanity still festers near the altars of religion, and even offers worship there ! The humanization of man has indeed begun, but its dawn is recent, its noonday distant still.

Dawn, not day,  
While scandal is mouthing a bloodless name at her cannibal feast,  
And rake-ruin'd bodies and souls go down in a common wreck,  
And the Press of a thousand cities is prized, for it smells of the beast,  
Or easily violates virgin Truth for a coin or a cheque.

The humanized world to come will have to come forth from the same old crucible of pain by which thus far the beast has been partially burnt out of man.

With the making of that world we with larger powers and wider reach of influence, in touch through electric nerves with every nation, have much more to do than the men of long-buried Babylon, whose work our very clock-dials perpetuate, had to do with



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the making of our world. All past generations still work with us in many ways. Some of our very jests are as ancient as the pyramids. In future ages we also shall not fail to count for all that we are permanently worth. Names perish; influence abides with part and power in the mortal world to come. The life which palpitates in us with hopes and fears, with noble aspiration and brave endeavour to leave the world better than we found it, may in thoughtless moments be undervalued. In the more serious moments which view it as the ante-natal life of a world which we are contributing to mould, no limit to its far-reaching possibilities of influence appears short of that outermost bound, where all mortal existence shall merge in the life that survives "the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds."

The solidest structures we can rear must be crumbled to dust by the tooth of time. The knowledge we laboriously acquire must be superseded and vanish before larger and truer. Our names with the stones on which they are carved above our graves will disappear. But *we* shall live. The net result of our work on earth will endure above in what we have become in the doing of it. It will endure in the world to come on earth in what our fellow men, in whose service we have done it, have become thereby. Only as we are intent on making this world of living men what it is to be are we in Jesus' way to the heavenly hereafter—the glory of going on in immortal happy service to our fellows and our Father.

We have now ascended, as it were, to a mountain-

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top for its inspiring outlook on a wide horizon. The greatness or the pettiness of life depends on the largeness or narrowness of the mental horizon that satisfies it. We need oftener to climb from our valley-business to the mountain-top and its width of vision.

Not always on the mount may we  
Rapt in the heavenly vision be ;  
The shores of thought and feeling know  
The spirit's tidal ebb and flow.  
The mount for vision, but below  
The paths of daily duty go ;  
And nobler life therein shall own  
The pattern on the mountain shown.

So Jesus, ere he began his ministry, contemplated from the mountain-top the world he meant to win by a higher method than the tempter there suggested. On another mountain-top he experienced a transfiguration which fortified his spirit for its last and sorest conflict. To us the world to come on this earth of ours, as viewed from the mount of far-reaching intelligent vision, should bring a transfiguration of all indifference and indolence into Christian interest and activity, devoted to work with God to bring to pass the good that he wills to be. Agencies of immeasurable fruitfulness are often initiated and set going by small deeds and humble persons. All things are possible to men of faith and patient courage. It is the privilege of the weakest to become a channel of the Spirit who is impelling all things onward to the divine goal.

O Living Will, that shalt endure  
When all that seems shall suffer shock,  
Rise in the spiritual rock,  
Flow through our deeds and make them pure.



Theological Bearings of Modern Philosophy  
and Science



## XVII

### THEOLOGICAL BEARINGS OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

PROFESSOR CALKINS, of Wellesley College, in her fresh and masterly work on the "Persistent Problems of Philosophy," calls attention to the fact that "avowed metaphysics in the last hundred years has been, at least qualitatively, monistic." That is, even the pluralist, Professor Howison, for instance, or Professor James, though stopping at the Many in his quest for ultimate reality, and refusing to conclude with Hegel, and Green, and Royce that it is One, still affirms that the Many are of *one kind*. Thus modern metaphysics inevitably tends to clear theology, as seasoned thought concerning God, of the ancient and inveterate dualism, whose extreme form was presented in Zoroastrianism and Manichæism, and which survives in present notions of an eternal devil and an endless hell of impotent rage against God.

Dualism, notwithstanding, is an existing fact, which no sane observer or thinker ignores. God and the individual man are two beings, not one. God's Will and man's will are often in opposition. Piety and profanity are antipodal. But the inspired insight of St. Paul's declaration to Greek philosophers, "In him we live, and move, and have our being,"

<sup>1</sup> From *The Homiletic Review*, January, 1908.

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saw these dualisms transcended in the ultimate reality which comprehends the Many in the One. A consistent Paulinist must be a monist. In his recent work on "Biblical Dogmatics," Dr. Milton S. Terry, even if not a thoroughgoing or consistent monist himself, recognizes "the profoundest monism" in the Scriptures.

It is not the spiritual insight of the Pauline monism, but inability to solve the problems springing from it, that hinders some from accepting it in its fulness. The affirmation, "In God we *live*," involved the further affirmation: In him we *will*; and this to a non-Christian audience. How this can be true, even of ungodly men, is not at once evident. Professor Royce<sup>1</sup> has given an answer to this question which is worthy of more attention than it has received. But if one finds the difficulty unyielding, is it not more rational to ascribe immaturity to one's reasoning power than to discredit the cardinal proposition, that the life of man, and consequently his living will, even when an evil will, exists in God?

The goal of that love of God "with all the mind" to which Jesus urges his disciples is a true thought of God as related to man's world, and especially to man himself. Here is large shortcoming, not among religious people only, but also their religious teachers. The ancient dualism, though it has died out of philosophy, still lives in the common thought of God and the world as over against each other, of deity and

<sup>1</sup> See "The Problem of Evil," *The New World*, June, 1897; also Vol. II. of Gifford Lectures on "The World and the Individual." See also the discussion on pages 268-70 following.

## Theological Bearings of Modern Philosophy

humanity as natures of essentially different kinds, and of man in his natural state as extraneous to God : the Churches jealously maintain this dualism in doctrinal standards. The Westminster Confession enshrines it in the Christological formula of the fifth century—"two natures and one person." At the bottom of this is the notion of an essential difference in kind between divine and human nature. Athanasius had affirmed this in the fourth century : "He [Christ] is by nature true God : we are of earth, and become sons by imitation." The same misconception lay concealed in the Nicene Creed beneath its sublime affirmations of the divine nature of the Son—"God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God ; begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father"—a formula which, dualistically construed, effectively barred out the dualistic Arian Unitarianism of that day. The equal subserviency of words to fundamentally different regulative ideas is illustrated by the fact that to-day the Unitarian of monistic type (I have such a friend of mine in mind, an idealist in his philosophy) can apply those sublime words to Jesus, as to a man naturally born but God-filled, as unqualifiedly as any orthodox Trinitarian. Long ago that philosophic Unitarian divine, Dr. Hedge, reading into the Nicene test-phrase concerning Christ, "of one substance with the Father," his affirmation of the oneness of the divine and the human nature, declared its assertion at Nicæa the fruit of Providential guidance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Ways of the Spirit," p. 76, 1878.

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"Nature is Spirit," said Principal Fairbairn years ago to an Oxford audience ; and, to one who privately asked him if he had used these words rhetorically or literally, said that he had never used any words more literally.<sup>1</sup> If the saying is true of nature, what is true of man ? What then must be thought of the common dualistic phrase, "*mere man*," so often employed in theological discussion ? If any clear meaning is in it, it can denote only a cleavage of the natural from the supernatural, a pulling apart of man from the God in whom he has his being, an elimination from humanity of the divine spark without which it would not be human. The Biblical teaching of the *active* immanence of God in the human race bans a phrase burdened with suggestions so untrue. Yet it is often on the lips of religious teachers ; a survival of the ancient dualism which thought to glorify God by vilifying man as but "dust and ashes." Essentially anti-Christian is this phrase, "*mere man*" ; for an essential affirmation of Christianity is the unity of God and man, founded in nature in order to be completed through grace.

Here is the basis of St. Paul's monism, whose briefer statement is in Jesus' saying to the Sadducee deniers of the resurrection, "All live unto him." More careful study of the seventh chapter of Romans and of the fifth chapter of Galatians would remove at least some of its attendant difficulties. For instance, the unity which we call human nature, now marred

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer's discussion of this dictum in "Reconsiderations and Reinforcements" (James Clarke and Co., London ; Thomas Whittaker, New York).

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by sin, is a complex thing ; two elements appear in it, a lower, derived from a brute ancestry, and a higher of much more recent origin, and as yet comparatively infantile. But this higher element is the specifically human ; and moral evil, sin, though by itself the product of neither of these two, each of them divinely constituted, each obedient to the law of its being, is the product of the conflict between them, through which the higher element achieves its human development.

The Pauline monism abolishes the false cleavage between the natural and the supernatural. It affirms that the Infinite is within the finite, as well as without :

Within all, but not shut in ;

Without all, but not shut out.

The natural is the outwardness of the supernatural ; the supernatural is the inwardness of the natural. "Nature," said Martineau, "is God's mask, not his competitor." "All is natural, and all is supernatural," said Carlyle. To discern this indwelling of the Infinite in the finite, as Tennyson saw it in the flower on the crannied wall, is to discern the naturalness of the divine incarnation in humanity, and to recognize it as a time-long process, rather than as an isolated event, though culminating in the event which has placed commemoration of the Advent at the beginning of the Christian year.

In this view it is profitless to inquire whether a case of parthenogenesis has ever occurred in human history. The reality of a divine incarnation in man is not to be staked on any point of doubt and controversy. If we are seeking for the point of view in

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which the fullest significance attaches to the Church's faith in the divinity of Christ, it has been well stated by Dr. William Adams Brown, of Union Seminary, in his "Christian Theology in Outline": "It is not that in Jesus we have the manifestation for a brief period of divine powers and relations normally absent from human life; but that in him for the first time there has been completely revealed in a human life that abiding relation between God and man which gives life its profoundest significance, and warrants our faith in the ultimate realization of the divine ideal in humanity."

The central affirmation of Christianity, "God was in Christ," is held both by dualistic and monistic thinkers in full identity of faith. It is merely a difference in the intellectual conception of it which parts them.

Not only does the ascendent modern philosophy thus lead away from traditional theological ideas, but science also, both mental and physical. Professor Ladd, of Yale, said many years ago that modern psychology was modifying our inherited theology. By this time "the psychology of religion" (the title of Professor Starbuck's well-known book) has become a familiar phrase. To that monistic conception of the natural and the supernatural, as two aspects of one process, which we have gained from modern philosophy, psychology also conducts us. The spiritual development which, when normally rounded out, is theologically termed conversion, has been shown by such investigators as President G. Stanley Hall and Professor



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Starbuck to be intimately connected with the physiological ripening which occurs at puberty. This discovery of the subserviency of the physical development to the spiritual at the awakening of the higher consciousness with its unselfing impulse, which, under right guidance, issues in the new birth called regeneration, is a discovery of God active as immanent Spirit in the springs of our life.

Psychology is devoted to the scientific study of human consciousness. One of our foremost psychologists, Professor James, years ago compared our consciousness to a stream that has depth as well as surface. Ordinary consciousness, continuous from day to day, and occupied with current interests, is merely the surface of the stream reflecting the objects that line its banks. Below this lie hidden the subconscious depths. Hence now and then emerge unbidden strange phenomena—visions, hallucinations, presentiments, flashes of genius, sublime intuitions, surprising powers. Hence, as from a secret mirror, are reflected glimpses of invisible objects, as in clairvoyance. It is here that mind effects communication with mind and makes no sign, as in thought-transference and telepathy. It is here that the hypnotist exercises command while the surface-consciousness sleeps. Since psychology has explored these recesses of our mystic frame, the intelligent Bible-reader no longer attributes to communications from heaven phenomena which science ascribes to clairvoyance or telepathy as natural endowments of a seer—Elisha, for instance. The day should have passed when Sunday-school pupils should be told in their lesson helps to see a

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proof of the divinity of Christ in his telling Nathanael that he had seen him otherwise than by ocular vision :  
“ When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.”

The psychologist exploring the underlying strata of the mind believes—and who has right to gainsay him?—that he has discovered in its subconscious deeps the meeting-place of the temporal and the eternal, where the human spirit feels the immediate breath of the divine,

Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost,

communicating intuitions, revelations, inspirations, once attributed to dispatches sent down from a heavenly throne. Our nature is divinized when God is found immanent at its centre. Humanity and deity can no longer be thought of as essentially different natures, or man as external to God.

On another side of reality the physicist—Sir Oliver Lodge, for instance, in his “ Life and Matter ”—joins hands with the philosopher and the psychologist in modifying the ancient forms of religious thought. The stark dualism which common sense recognizes between matter and spirit may well seem invincible. Dr. Samuel Johnson considered the Berkeleian doctrine of the unreality of matter refuted by kicking at a stone—the kick encounters resistance ; but this proves no more than that matter is something which resists force. That resistance to force is also a property of an immaterial thing, such as magnetism, we have known ever since we found a magnet resisting effort to wrench from it its armature. What, then, if matter

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also should prove to be only an embodiment of resisting force? This the physicist now asserts.

No more revolutionary conception has been introduced into present-day science than that of the immaterial nature of all that is included under the term "matter." The old dilemma, "God or atoms," is superseded, for the ultimate term of matter is no longer the atom. This, indeed, is found to be a very complex and an ethereal thing, a congeries of vibrating points of electric energy, termed "ions," or "electrons," some seven hundred of them in an atom of hydrogen, and fifty-five times as many in an atom of gold. This discovery that air, clouds, clods, oceans, Alps, and living bodies are all composed of what the ancients, when they saw it in the dazzling thunderbolt, called "the fire of God," may bewilder the imagination, but it expels from rational thought the inveterate dualism between matter and spirit. Principal Fairbairn, saying from the standpoint of philosophy, "Nature is Spirit," is corroborated by Professor Hyslop, saying from the standpoint of physics, "Matter is Spirit," and telling us that, except for convenience, and for historical reasons, the very word "matter" might be disused. Researches into radio-activity are now adding fresh confirmation of the fact, and promising further fruitful discoveries in the same line. While all this mightily reinforces the ancient faith in the encompassing and pervading activity of God, it tends to substitute for the ancient thought of God and Nature as external to each other the truer thought of God as in Nature, and of Nature as in God.

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Real though unwitting foes of the ancient faith are those who in its supposed interest, and having in mind some atheistic monists, attack monism, suspecting it of an anti-Christian tendency; who cry out that Christianity must die, if its ancient intellectual tenement is abandoned; that it cannot survive transition to another that promises to be more enduring. More sane are Holmes's saying:

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,

and Edward Caird's: "'Christian' is the permanent adjective to define the ever-growing ideal of humanity." There is surely everything to hope and nothing to fear from philosophy and science as the handmaids of religion. Their rectifying and clarifying work upon the intellectual structures of religion cannot rationally be thought to have reached its limit.

The seer and the scientist concur in assuring us that humanity, comparatively a new occupant of an ancient planet, has millions of years before it in a habitable world—a hundred million, says Professor Shaler, of Harvard, and Tennyson says:

If twenty million summers are stored in the sunlight still,  
We are far from the noon of man, there is room for the race to grow.

Is it not, then, childish to write "*finished*" on any theological fabric, however well it may have served past generations? Of future generations the Scripture is true, "that they apart from us should not be made perfect." But, as Pascal said that the successive generations of men must be conceived of as one man, always living and always learning; so it is true of us,

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that we, apart from those who are to take up the work of God after us, cannot be made perfect—are not to perfect God's work in this world. We may, indeed, imitate the ancient mariners who said: "No more beyond," as they looked out of the Gibraltar gate upon the apparently boundless Atlantic; but we may better expect the discoverer of a new continent to come in the fulness of time. The advance of learning concerning things human and divine must go on, until all that is involved in the central Christian truth of God in man and man in God is fully unfolded in thought and realized in deed.



## Some Implicates of Theism





## XVIII

### SOME IMPLICATES OF THEISM<sup>1</sup>

*All things consist*<sup>2</sup> *in God*, is the brief statement of theism. That is, as the Biblical word here literally rendered means, they hold together or cohere in him. They exist because he subsists as their ground. The brief statement of pantheism inverts this: *God consists in all things*; is their sum, not their ground; exists because they exist. Theism and pantheism agree that God is in all things, the immanent and universal Energy. But theism affirms more; pantheism, no more. Pantheism holds that this energy first becomes conscious when conscious beings like man proceed from it. That is, consciousness is a product of evolution. Theism reverses this. It holds that evolution is a product of consciousness; that the energy immanent in all things is also a transcendent energy, consciously originating and sustaining all, but inexhaustibly exceeding all that proceeds from it. This affirmation is the distinctive mark of the theist, who is sometimes ignorantly criticized as a pantheist by those who hold a deistic conception of God as a Maker extraneous to his works. No pantheist could

<sup>1</sup> From *The American Journal of Theology*, April, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> For this use of the word see Colossians i. 17 (R.V. margin).

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affirm this more positively than the Apostle Paul.<sup>1</sup> But Paul was no pantheist.

Leaving pantheism here, one asks how theism more precisely understands God's immanence and God's transcendence.

Under the term *immanence* the theist expands the popular idea of the divine omnipresence, as an all-seeing eye, into the thought of God's all-energizing intelligence, as ever active, dynamic within all visible forms of existence, giving birth to all being, maintaining all motion, efficient in the activity of all life, never interfering with the orderly workings of nature or of mind, while ever absolutely controlling them. This statement by no means rules out the possibility of miracle in the legitimate sense of the word, denoting, as it does, what is preterhuman, not in an absolute, but in a relative sense ; relatively, that is, to the existing range of human knowledge and power.<sup>2</sup> The chief problem of theism is to reconcile this conception of the immanent divine control of all things with other conceptions which at first glance seemingly contradict it—(1) the freedom and responsibility of human action under this absolute control, and (2) the benevolence of God notwithstanding the evil of the world.

The solution of this problem may be briefly stated thus :

I. As to the evil will of a wicked man, the theist affirms the divine energy as immanent therein, but

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 28 ; 1 Cor. xii. 6 ; xv. 28 ; Eph. iv. 6 ; Phil. ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of this statement see "Miracles and Supernatural Religion," by the present writer (Macmillan).

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that the evil will is none the less responsible, because free. This for the following reasons: (1) Nothing that exists can be in any way external to the Infinite Being. "In him we live" is true of all that live, of devils as of saints, though in very different ways. (2) The impulses even of tigers and vipers are included in the complex of executive forces by which the world-process is carried on, a collective term for which is *the Will of God*. So are the tigerish or viperish impulses in the animalized men whom the higher ethical impulses fail to control. (3) These lower impulses, being a part of God's work in nature, are not evil in themselves, but evil only when antagonizing the higher, or willed in preference to the higher. Appetite and passion, like fire, are good servants, bad masters. (4) Will, whether divine or human, is self-directive power. The Infinite Self being inclusive of all finite selves, the Infinite Will must be inclusive of all finite wills. But these, though thus included, are none the less self-directive, or, as we say, "free." We virtually admit this whenever exhorting a bad man to become a better man. Were he not free to do as exhorted, exhorting him would be foolish. The consciousness of such freedom is an ultimate fact and irrefutable. (6) Full scope for such free self-direction of the finite will within the Infinite Will appears given in the indefinite variety of ways in which it must be conceived possible for the Divine purpose to realize itself in an effective but non-interfering control. (7) The sinner's self-misdirecting will is therefore his own in enough of freedom to incur responsibility. The sinner virtually admits this in every self-reproach,

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for not having done what he tells himself he could and ought. (8) His self-misdirecting will, therefore, included but free within the Infinite Will, is included only to be overcome<sup>1</sup> in just condemnation for the misdirection, as guilty as free.

The foregoing considerations may be stated otherwise, and more briefly, thus : (1) But for the continual supply of divine energy our life could not sustain itself. (2) In a sinful act the sin is the freely perverted use of this divine energy. (3) This perverted use is the act of a self-misdirecting or sinful will. (4) God is immanent in such a will simply as immanent in the man. The man's will is simply the man willing. His self-directive power in willing is of God. God is in it as power, not as direction to evil. (5) Hence, while the power is God's, the self-direction is the man's own. Hence his responsibility for it, his guilt in self-misdirection. Conscience affirms this as an ultimate fact. Beyond this—

This main-miracle, that thou art thou,  
With power on thine own act and on the world,

no analysis can go.

II. As to the other half of the problem, the vindication of the divine benevolence, notwithstanding the seeming contradiction of it by the evil in the world, the practical solution is in a comparison of the alternative beliefs, that the Infinite Being is (1) malevolent, or (2) indifferent.

The decisive considerations are these : (1) A belief to which great contradictions appear must be accepted,

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews x. 29.

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if still greater contradictions appear to the alternative belief. (2) To determine the line of least contradiction, the apparent dynamic tendency of the whole course of things thus far must be taken into view, not the apparently static condition of a given fragment of it. (3) In such a view there is manifest a steady, though slow, process of eliminating the evils of the world ; a slow, but continuous, growth of a benevolent spirit in the world ; a faith gradually spreading and increasing, in the face of all the suffering of the world, that God is good ; an intense conviction of many of the greatest sufferers in the sovereignty of the divine goodness as controlling even the evil for benevolent ends. (4) On the principle that the whole is greater than a part, reason must accept this testimony of the general course of things—a testimony fatal to the alternatives of malevolence or indifference. Reason is therefore bound to hold that benevolence controls the evolutionary process, notwithstanding the seeming indications of isolated facts to the contrary.

From these problems involved in the immanence of God we pass to those involved in his *transcendence*.

The common conception of it seems to be *quantitative*, extensional, an overpassing of all bounds of space, or time, or human power ; conceptions rooted in the deistic mode of thought concerning God as external to his universe. As an attribute of pure Spirit, the true import of transcendence is not quantity, but *quality* of being. It is illustrated in the fact that a Shakespeare is greater than any or all of his works. In affirming, with a scientist like the late

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Professor Cope, that evolution is the product of consciousness, theism both affirms and interprets the transcendence of God. It is the essential quality of the constant Producer as distinct from that of the transient product; of limitless thought as distinct from limited things; of the perfectly conscious as distinct from the partly conscious or non-conscious; of Self-Existence as distinct from derived existence; of Life Infinite as distinct from life in finite forms. Only qualitatively is it properly conceivable. It is spiritual, dynamic, vital, belonging to the very idea of an immanent conscious life that is self-existent and eternal. Consequently, any supposed distribution of functions between God transcendent and God immanent is wholly illusory. The transcendent is involved in the immanent, the vital in the mechanical, the "supernatural" or spiritual in the natural, the infinite in the finite, the sacred in the secular. "Nature is Spirit," said Principal Fairbairn. Only as immanent the transcendent Spirit, as St. Paul said, "worketh all in all." The forces by which God makes a plant grow and a religion grow differ as the forces which we exert in mechanical work and in moral work. The ultimate force is spiritual. Its modes of energizing differ only as its ends differ.

The Infinite and Eternal Energy whence all things proceed is identical, as Herbert Spencer declared, with that which wells up within us under the form of consciousness. The astronomer Herschel compared the force of gravitation to the pressure of a Universal Will. The ripe theologian goes farther: "All cosmic power is will," says Dr. James Martineau. This has

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been notably reaffirmed by a great scientist. "The whole universe," says A. R. Wallace, "is not merely dependent on, but actually is, the will of higher intelligences or of one supreme intelligence." This is in striking accord with Augustine's saying: "The Will of God is the nature of things." To think of the Divine Will as an energy outside of the evolutionary process of nature, and occasionally breaking into it with interference or cataclysm, is grossly anthropomorphic. To conceive of the Will of God as extraneous to the forces resident in nature, and to divide and separate these from it, as the unconscious from the conscious, the material from the spiritual, is fallacious. The evolution, being the product of consciousness, must be the product of conscious Will, and the ultimate "resident force" is therefore spiritual and moral. Either God is not at all in the resident forces which carry on the evolutionary process, or he is consciously and actively in them as immanent Will. The drama of history, no less than the process of nature, exhibits that "toil co-operant to an end" which evinces control by *Executive Mind*—a term identical with Will. Its mode of working defies analysis. We can affirm only that it is ever from within outward, from the centre; but "God's centre is everywhere, his circumference nowhere." One who thinks of the Divine Will as working in innumerable separate acts of volition—one for every raindrop, etc.—needs to reflect that our own will, whenever we walk, does not put forth a separate volition for every step, but depends on the automatic operation of the lower nerve-centres, which it both sets in motion and keeps to their work.



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Furthermore : from the theistic statement that the evolution is the product of consciousness it follows that it is not reasonable to think of the highest products of human consciousness, as ethics and religion, as any more outside of the evolutionary process than the lowest forms of nature, organic or inorganic. From the lowest to the highest, in the social organization of ants, and the mechanic art of beavers, and no less in the constructions of statesmen and churchmen, executive mind, that is, conscious will, is found working with resident forces termed "lower" because of the lower nature of their product, to all which it is related as generic force to specific. Only as one Universal Will underlies all particular wills is there a basis of unity for all these as co-operant to a common purpose. But the higher we ascend through the grades of organized life, the more we find of conscious will in a free adaptation of means to ends. In man a range of self-directive power is reached which obtains for his will, as contrasted with that of beavers, ants, etc., the name of "free." Yet is his will only a larger artery than theirs for the controlling current of the Universal Will, whose time-long evolutionary flow constitutes the Self-Revelation of the Eternal One.

Here in this fact of the *imperium in imperio* of man in God, a conditioned independence that is wholly dependent on the conditioning Will, we reach the cloudline of the mountain. To the ultimate question of psychology, *What am I?* no conclusive answer, said Lotze, can be returned. Only from the standpoint of the Absolute, says Professor Seth, can



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we be absolutely intelligible to ourselves. We must rest in the confession :

Our wills are ours, we know not how ;

Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

Finally, the universe of things and wills is a living Universe, because springing from one self-existent Life, in whom all being grounds. There is a phenomenal duality of life, as derived and undervived ; no real duality, as divine and not divine. The life of the insect may seem undivine, because so dim and rudimentary. Life in its highest range and full development is seen to be divine, as in the Christ. Yet even to the humblest form of life, the flower in the crannied wall, the poet truly said :

. . . *if* I could understand

What you are, root and all, and all in all,

I should know what God and man is.

Nothing finite is only finite. Not only is it in the infinite, but the infinite, at once immanent and transcendent, is in it :

Within all, but not shut in ;

Without all, but not shut out.

And this infinite is an infinite Life. It is infinite, not as if indeterminate, but rather, says Dr. Edward Caird, as being inexhaustible. It is infinite, not as if extended outside of limits known as finite, but rather, says Dr. Caird again, as without any limits except those which it imposes on itself. The true infinite, then, is not the unlimited, but the self-limiting. That *kenosis*, or self-limitation of the divine, which St. Paul saw

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in Jesus,<sup>1</sup> is the universal characteristic of the infinite Life which we name God. His *kenosis*, a humbling of the highest to the lowest, is seen, as Dr. Samuel Harris, of Yale, said, in all the forms of finite existence that variously manifest the infinite Life from which all finite life originates. Thus all life is, in its essential unity, divine. The Life transcendent is ever becoming life immanent. Life immanent is at the same time ever one with Life transcendent. The temporal thus included in the eternal may say, in consciousness of what it is: "Before Abraham was born,<sup>2</sup> I am."

<sup>1</sup> Philippians ii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 58 (R.V. *margin*).

# Principia of Modern Theology



## XIX

### PRINCIPIA OF MODERN THEOLOGY

OUR interpretations of the innumerable phenomena of the world and man are regulated by a comparatively few fundamental principles, the *principia* of our thought. For instance, the two opposite principles of geocentric and of heliocentric motion generate the vast diversity between ancient astronomy and modern. Contradictory theologies spring thus from opposite principles at the root of thought. The differences in the religious thinking of such opposites as Thomas Paine and Edward Caird root in opposite primary conceptions—an outside God apart from men, and the indwelling God,

Centre and Soul of every sphere.

In the contrariety of these fundamental conceptions, the deistic and the theistic, lies the radical divergence between Judaism and Christianity, and also between the Judaic Christianity that still is widely prevalent and the religious thought expressed by Jesus.

The present diversity of thought among religious thinkers is due to the diversity of their regulative ideas. When this diversity is reduced to unity in common conceptions of reality, men will think as nearly alike in religion as now in astronomy, in which, notwithstanding agreement in general, there still remain open questions giving rise to minor differences

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in details, *e.g.*, the "canals" of Mars, the nebular hypothesis, etc. Progress toward such unity is plainly perceptible. The nineteenth century furnished thought with a new universe, material and mental, and so with a new revelation of the Spirit of the universe. Inevitably, therefore, a distinctively modern theology supervened upon the mediæval, slowly, indeed, but steadily.

Part of the host have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now.

The regulative ideas which fundamentally outline the religious thought that conforms to the positions of modern knowledge may be briefly phrased, though volumes might be required for their adequate exposition. Correspondence with theological friends prominent in different religious groups has revealed a larger consensus of theological opinion than is commonly supposed. It seems desirable that this fact should be released from the privacy of personal correspondence, for confirmation of the statement just made, that theologians formerly at variance are drawing together on the common ground prepared by their critico-historical, scientific, psychological, and philosophical agreements. The group of correspondents thus drawn into theological agreement by their agreement in the assured positions of modern learning includes Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Jews, Methodists, Presbyterians, Reformed, Unitarians, and Universalists—a significant assemblage, certainly, in their expression of substantial concurrence in the theses stated below, to the formulation of which some of them have been individually helpful in particulars.

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A question raised and answered in the course of this correspondence—Why is Christology excluded from these theses?—deserves its answer to accompany them here. Christology, as its definitive terms—Christos, Messiah, Prophet, Priest, King, Saviour, Shepherd, etc.—imply, is essentially a doctrine of *functions*. As such, it strictly belongs to the category of *method*, but method is secondary to *principia*, or first principles. Theology, said Principal Fairbairn at the London Congregational Council in 1891, “must on its doctrinal side be theocentric.” The word itself implies this. Christocentric is a term applicable to theological method only. These theses are intended to include only the fundamental principles of theology, in distinction from whatever is secondary or inferential.

The profound truth of which Darwin a half-century ago became the prophet—the *unity of Life* throughout its range of forms from the lowest to the highest—points in accord with inspired Scripture to the Eternal Life, named by Jesus the “Living Father,” as the proper starting-point of reasoned thought concerning the Being “in whom we live, and move, and have our being.” The thought that theology in becoming more scientific must become more biological has recently begun to gain recognition. In the construction and arrangement of the following statements this thought has been dominant. Though dogmatic in form, they are simply theses for thought, such as may be hoped helpful toward clearer views, and consequently wider agreement.

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## PRINCIPIA <sup>1</sup>

1. *Life* self-existent, Source of all lives ; Eternal Spirit, Ground of all natures, self-conscious, rational, purposive, the Fount of human personality, all-sustaining, all-pervading, Biblically named "The Living God," "The Holy One," "Our Father."

2. Nature a hierarchy of natures more or less fully phenomenal of Life or Spirit, the *Supernatural* Reality. The natural is the outwardness of the Supernatural ; the Supernatural the ultimate inwardness of the natural.

3. Humanity, the fullest known expression of Life, and so the supreme interpreter of Deity, thus postulating some community of thought, and so an essential oneness with Deity underlying all difference.

4. Transcendence and Immanence, as predicates of Deity, being terms of Spirit, are primarily of purposive and teleological significance—dynamic concepts.

5. Whatsoever God does he does unceasingly, in methods accordant with natures, and severally uniform throughout all duration.

6. Creation, Incarnation, Revelation, Redemption, Judgment, Atonement, Salvation, are continuous processes of immanent Deity, signalized by salient events.

7. Incarnation (enfleshing), a distinctive type of Creation, is a corollary of Immanence, and not sporadic, but universal.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *The Homiletic Review*, August, 1908



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8. Revelation is the process of progressively enabling men to discover truth, to discern good and evil, right and wrong, and to think the thought of God, according to the measure of willingness and capacity.

9. Redemption, a constructive process, is the deliverance of spiritual life from the matrix and mastery of the physical and psychical, ultimately perfecting the image of God in man.

10. Judgment, essentially a corrective process, is naturally auxiliary to Redemption.

11. Atonement (at-one-ment) is the process of reconciling man to God, lawlessness to law, through satisfaction rendered to the demand of God immanent in conscience for repentance and obedience.

12. Salvation is progressively wrought out through the conforming of conscience and will to the highest ideal of goodness, personal and social, within its horizon.

13. The moral and the religious life, really, not conventionally such, are each inspired by an infinite ideal, and therefore essentially one and inseparable.

14. Ordered harmony (cosmos), as it has superseded physical disorder (chaos), must ultimately supersede moral disorder (sin), and consummate the moral Kingdom of God.

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled unto all the fulness of God.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever.”—EPHESIANS III. 14-21 (R.V.).

## XX

### THE PRAYER OF ST. PAUL <sup>1</sup>

Ephesians iii. 14-21.

FATHER, to thee we bow ;  
Father of Christ art thou,  
    Father of all.  
In thee we live and move ;  
Thy family of love  
Is one—below, above ;  
    Thou, All in all.

Thy rich and glorious grace  
Gird all our struggling days  
    With holy power ;  
That so thy Spirit's might,  
Filling our souls with light,  
May lift to cloudless height  
    Each o'ercast hour.

In us may faith enshrine  
Thy Christ—his Cross our sign,  
    His love our root ;  
That power to apprehend  
The love which knows no end  
From strength to strength may tend  
    With holy fruit.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Outlook*, January 11, 1908.

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We with all saints would know  
The utmost thou wouldst show  
    In Christ our Lord :  
All lower longings stilled,  
From him would we be filled  
Full as thy grace hath willed,  
    Fulness of God.

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